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# EMBLEMS.

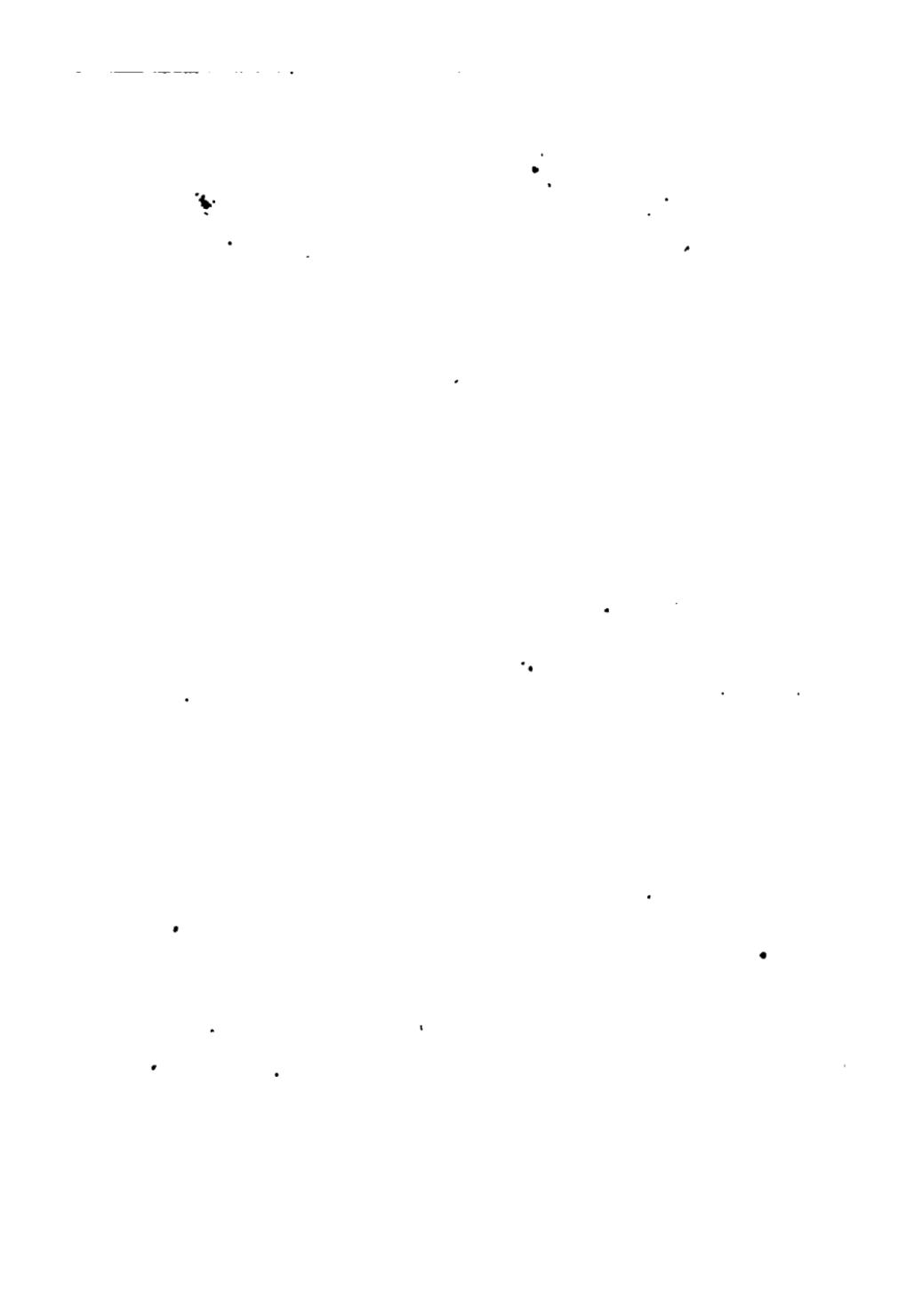


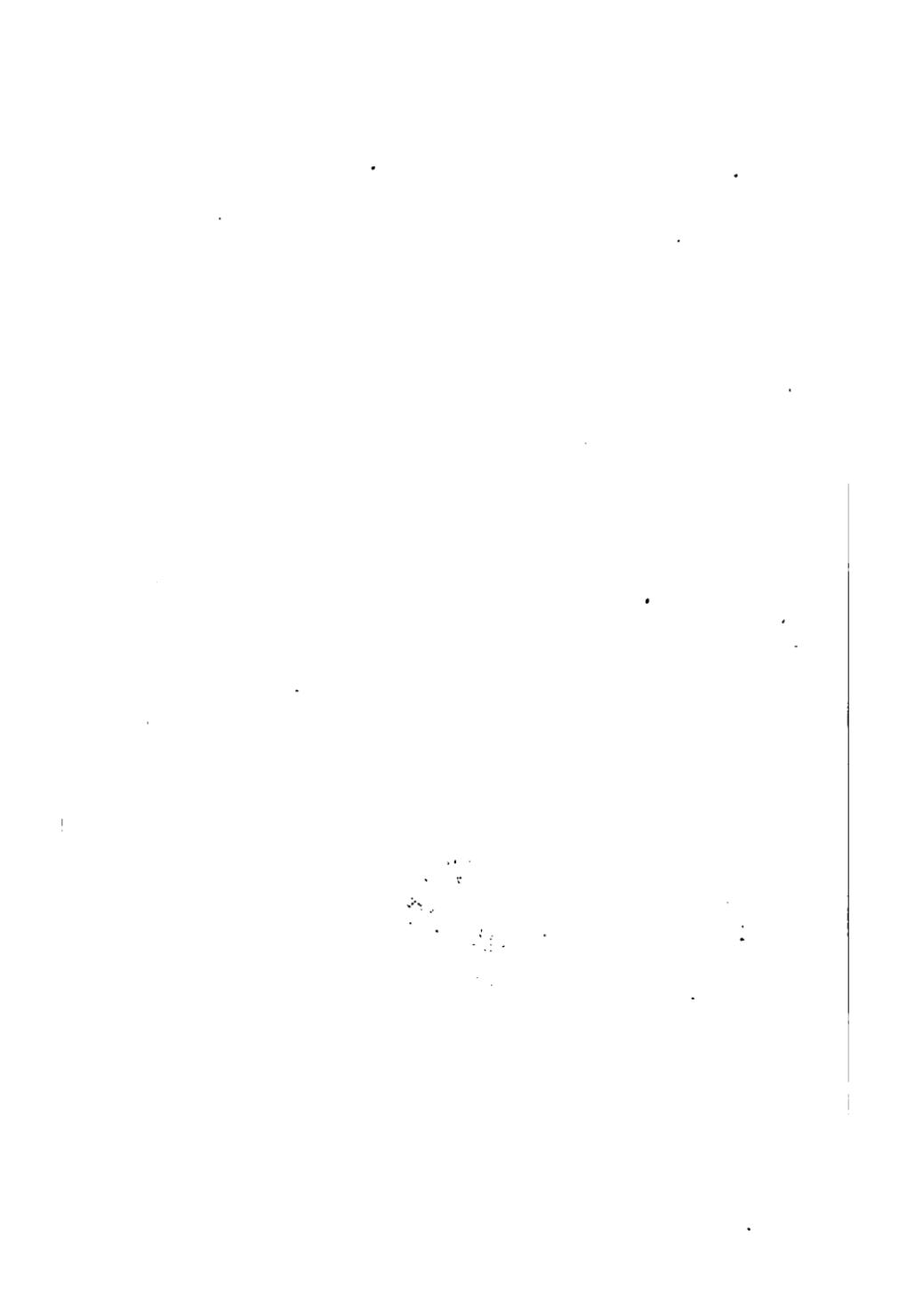
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*L. H. GREENDON.*



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# EMBLEMES:

A Bird's-Eye View of the Harmonies of Nature  
with Mankind.

BY

LEO HARTLEY GRINDON,

AUTHOR OF "LIFE: ITS NATURE," ETC.; "THE TREES OF OLD  
ENGLAND;" "BRITISH AND GARDEN BOTANY,"  
ETC., ETC.



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**F. PITMAN,  
20, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.**

## P R E F A C E.

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THOUGH formally published only now, this little essay was written more than twenty years ago, and in part offered for perusal through the medium of a magazine. Condensed and corrected, and with a few new paragraphs introduced where there seemed to be occasion, it is now submitted to a wider circle, in the hope of suggesting further inquiry into the beautiful subject of which it treats. That it should be either "scientific" or "metaphysical" has been no part of the writer's design, or ambition either. The idea has been simply to string together a few illustrations of the harmonies which exist between man and the world he lives in, and to provide an hour of useful reading for the amiable and the thoughtful.

MANCHESTER, *March*, 1869.

## CONTENTS.

	PAGES
CHAPTER I.—What Emblems are.—Figurative Language.— Functions of Poetry . . . . .	1—6
CHAPTER II.—Illustrations from Zoology.—The Nightingale. —Bees.—Ants.—The Lion.—Heraldry and Mythology	7—16
CHAPTER III.—Illustrations from Plants and Flowers.— Buds.—Leaves.—The Ivy.—Thorns and Thistles . . .	17—25
CHAPTER IV.—Illustrations from Plants and Flowers (con- tinued).—Seeds.—The “Language of Flowers.”— Poetry.—Thankfulness to God . . . . .	26—34
CHAPTER V.—Illustrations from Plants and Flowers (con- cluded).—Trees.—Forests.—The Vine, the Olive, and the Fig.—Influence of the Woods, Groves, and Pools	35—51
CHAPTER VI.—Illustrations from Inanimate Nature.— Rivers and Streams.—Springs and Fountains.—The Sea . . . . .	52—61
CHAPTER VII.—Illustrations from Inanimate Nature (con- tinued).—Mountains and Valleys.—The Sun and Stars. —Light.—Minerals and Metals.—Gold . . . . .	62—77
CHAPTER VIII.—Illustrations from the Seasons, etc.— Spring, Summer, Autumn (with Signification of Colours).—Ancient Sculpture . . . . .	78—89
CHAPTER IX.—The Omnipresent God.—Practical applica- tion of the idea of the preceding pages . . . . .	90—96

## EMBLEMS.

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### CHAPTER I.

"Solitude has great and awful instructions. Shakspere, Chaucer, Homer, and Dante saw the splendour of meaning that plays over the visible world; they knew that a tree had another use than for bearing apples, and corn another than for meal, and the ball of the earth another than for tillage and roads;—they knew that these things bear a second and finer harvest to the mind of man, being emblems of his thought, and conveying in all their processes and natural history a certain mute commentary on human life."—*Emerson.*

1. EMBLEMS are to the eyes of men what figurative language is to the ear. They are the same as to nature and purpose, differing only in the mode in which they appeal to our intelligence. When, for example, Chaucer and Ossian speak of leafless trees as images of persons from whom all the enjoyments of life have been stripped away, the expressions present themselves to our minds as beautiful comparisons, appropriate to literature and poetry, thus as illustrating the spirit and force of Simile:—when, upon the other hand, we look upon such trees ourselves, and associate with them the ideas which flow from the poetic sentiment in our own bosoms, we have Emblems before us, and

make use of them in turn, to portray the feelings of which they furnish the intelligible symbol.

2. Figurative language, however, comprehends far more than what is ordinarily so called. The term is not to be understood as merely intending those definite rhetorical forms which the grammarians distinguish as figures of speech; every word in every language under heaven, excepting perhaps some few crude and artificial ones, is figurative in essence. This is palpable enough to the student of philology who continues his inquiries from the dictionary into nature, (the source and *genitrix* of all things), and comes of the magnificent pre-established harmony between the mind of man and the material world, and of that sublime munificence of the Creator, which after providing an inexhaustible storehouse of images and illustrations of human thought and human emotion, gave impulse to the intellect to relish and use it. Nature, as it lies diffused around us, shining, boundless, immortal, is latent language. Man cannot utter a single sentence without drawing upon objective nature, and the most exquisite and eloquent utterances are those which disclose most plainly whence they have come. So much of the current language of these, the true "old times" of the world, has become fossilized—so many of our most familiar terms belong to dialects no longer used for social converse,—that the superb and indisputable fact of metaphor constituting the very sub-

stance, the absolute warp and woof of language, no less than its embroidery, is to the mass of speakers quite unknown. The fact is there, nevertheless, for the enthusiasm and refreshment of whoever cares to dive into the past, and to list the universal echoes subsisting between man and nature, and which are as lively to-day as they were in the beginning.

3. Language, objective nature, emblems, the thoughts, sentiments, and affections of men and women, are thus only different ways of stating the same primitive ideas,—ways adopted by Infinite love and wisdom, for the sake of giving beauty and delight to the creation. Talk not of figurative language as a mere device of the orator; or of emblems as an invention of the artist, arbitrary and capricious. Fanciful and unreal ones no doubt there are, since the secular misfortune of every great truth is to be vitiated as soon as born, and of every line of perfect beauty to be conventionalized. When all have been criticized, it still remains true that metaphors are realities, and that all realities are metaphors. The harmonies of nature and mind are the microscope of thought. If we choose to dwell in the teachings of the unassisted eye, how shall we know what lies within the circle it cannot reach? To interpret nature is one of the highest privileges granted to man; he vindicates it by finding the world the mirror it is.

4. To the cultivation of our *penetrative* sight, as a faculty over and above the superficial beholding, we at once owe all our true and active knowledge, and all our real capacity for perception of the beautiful. Only by the comparison of things can we judge of the qualities that may pertain to them ; and without a just understanding of the relations which subsist between those which resemble and those which differ, or which *seem* to resemble and differ, it is impossible to estimate them, and to pronounce upon their utilities and their significance. To perceive any natural object whatever, we must qualify ourselves to group all our fancies about it, for the time being, as a pivot and centre ; to realize, in a word, what we have just referred to as the "significance" of the object, which is only another way of determining "What does it represent ? Of what is it the emblem ?" So with the feeling of the beautiful. Why do we derive gladness from the sunshine, that temporary paradise, so that our hearts laugh when they bask in it ? Why does the infinite azure, dappled with pearl, remind us of constancy ? Why do the running streams,

" Making soft music to the enamelled stones,"

infuse always a sense of life and abounding solace ? Consciously or unconsciously, we feel that they are emblems ; and they are beautiful to us because they speak a language which our souls can comprehend,

and not only comprehend, but feel to be wisdom. We should cultivate the love of the beautiful if we would become truly intelligent as to nature. For to love beauty is to gain new insight, since we thereby step into sunbeams; and since beauty is the index of a larger truth than mere book-knowledge, which is only the abstract of the past, whereas beauty is the herald of the future, beckoning, and pointing onwards, like the spring, or a happy child. So to proceed, is of course, the *poetical* way of viewing things. Good. It is for this identical reason that we should constantly strive to exercise our natural capacity for accepting things as emblems and representatives. Prose, like selfishness, takes care of itself; that which we should always be aspiring towards is the poetical, and the spirit of generosity.

5. Do not confound the poetical way of viewing things with the *expression* of poetry. Poetry, the first and finest of the fine arts, is the making a noble use, according to our particular talents and opportunities, of such amiable and noble emotions as we are capable of. And this may be done through the medium, either of words, when the perfect expression constitutes written verse, or it may be done through marble, or painting, or music. But there must be grounds for the noble emotions before they can be experienced, and these come of the habit of viewing things poetically, and

are supplied by the imagination, which, contemplating nature as a world of emblems, assembles and groups the beautiful ideas which belong to them. Emblems, as received and used by the poetic faculty, have nothing in them defective and untrustworthy. No poet, worthily so called, lives in illusions. He is the high-priest of truth, as well as a singer and a painter of beautiful scenes. In our own small degree, we may be assured that we also are dealing with truths. When there are two interpretations offered of a given difficulty, or of any question whatever that refers to matters above secular and physical needs, that solution which men would call the poetical, as opposed to the prosaic, may infallibly be relied upon as the truest and highest. It was not without reason that the ancients accounted poetry the language of the gods and of divinely inspired men. As the expression of the silent and universal symbolism of nature, touching men's hearts at every point, and exciting noble emotions in those who listened, poetry could not fail to be regarded as heaven-born. To this day we acknowledge it to be so, speaking instinctively of the "inspiration" of those who deal with it and who diffuse it, whether through the medium of the pen or of the marble, of the canvas or of the lute.

## CHAPTER II.

### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM ZOOLOGY.

6. It would appear extraordinary, were we unaware of the insatiableness of analogy, that there is scarcely an emotion or peculiarity of character belonging to man which has not its emblem among the inferior animals. But such is undoubtedly the fact, nature being never tired of publishing her ideas in a diversity of languages. In the jay we have the emblem of a petulant girl; the magpie has all the flippancy, the vanity, and the intrusion of an ignorant fop; sheep, lambs, bulls, bears, foxes, and snakes are emblematic to a proverb. Men of penetration and sagacity often find it expedient to appear blind; and then the wise in their own conceit fancy they are dull and only half awake to what is going on. They do not perceive that it is but acting mentally in the same way that the eagle, the owl, divers, sea-gulls, and certain other birds continually do physically; namely, when they close the peculiar secondary eyelid called the nictitating membrane, which being transparent, allows the eyes to be shielded, though the lids are left open. Wise men see more with their eyes shut than wiseacres are often able to perceive with their eyes wide open; a woman captivates a man immeasurably more by a

certain discreetness in overlooking, than by always acknowledging herself, either in words or demeanour, fully conscious of what is before her. Doves and pigeons, again, from the remotest ages, have been regarded as emblems of conjugal love, because of their amiable and chaste behaviour one to another. It is remarked, however, by Blumenbach, that "as to the so highly-prized fidelity and chastity of the turtle-dove, it presents nothing superior to other birds which lead the same mode of life."

7. With the grasshopper, the idea of lively cheerfulness has been associated from the time of Anacreon at the least. The cricket is another emblem of cheerfulness, as prettily described by Cowper. With the name of the nightingale, on the other hand, the word melancholy is almost synonymous. But though celebrated as a melancholy bird by most poets, ancient as well as modern, especially by Sophocles and Virgil in old time, and by Shakspere and Milton in our own age, the nightingale is in reality sorrowful only by name. Some of the poets do actually refer to her as a cheerful bird, Chaucer for instance. All the songs of birds are songs of gladness. "It is from association only that the nightingale derives her powers of disposing the heart to melancholy. Her notes, strong and sonorous, are cheerful and enlivening when heard by day, and seem pensive only when nature is lulled in repose, and our feelings are hushed to silence;—

when the sound of the wind among the trees, of distant bells, or of the music of running waters, touches the heart with nearly the same emotions as the notes of the bird herself."

8. Fidelity, patience, distrust, perverseness, cunning, cruelty, all the virtues and vices of our nature, are similarly expressed in different animals, birds, or insects, the appropriate introduction of which as the substitute for written descriptions of character is not only in the highest degree poetical, but often conveys the desired idea far more effectively. What a world of meaning is conveyed by the representation of an industrious people under the emblem of a hive of bees! What is more beautiful and instructive, and at the same time more simple, as an emblem, than even a single working bee, as, loaded with honey, yet never tired, it still "improves each shining hour"? Shakspere, who left neither the depths of the heart nor the secrets of nature unexplored, compares a hive of bees to a free and well-directed government.

"So work the honey-bees;  
Creatures that, by a rule in nature, teach  
The act of order to a peopled kingdom.  
They have a king, and officers of sorts;  
Where some, like magistrates, correct at home;  
Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad;  
Others, like soldiers, arm'd in their stings,  
Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds;

Which pillage they, with merry march, bring home  
To the tent-royal of their emperor,  
Who, busied in his majesty, surveys  
The singing masons building roofs of gold;  
The civil citizens kneading up the honey;  
The poor mechanic porters crowding in  
Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate;  
The sad-eyed justice, with his surly hum,  
Delivering o'er to executors pale  
The lazy, yawning drone."

In this most beautiful and exact comparison, Shakspere, as would naturally be expected, was anticipated by Virgil, whose 4th Georgic (wherein the passage occurs, is wholly devoted to the history of bees and bee-life. One of the Roman historians was equally struck by the analogy, and appositely remarks in the course of his illustration, that as nothing is good for one bee which is not equally good for every other inmate of the hive, so neither can anything be esteemed right or proper which favours certain individuals of a community at the expense of others.

9. Ants have been regarded from the earliest times as the emblems of forethought and prudence. This, however, appears to be partly founded on mistake, for though certain tropical species are said to hoard provisions, Huber asserts that those of Europe and Syria do not do so.\* Like bees, they live in har-

\* "Recherches sur les Mœurs des Fourmis Indigènes, par P. Huber." Paris, 1810.

mony and build, but unlike the tenants of the hive, they are almost entirely carnivorous. The error would seem to have arisen from the circumstance of ants being often seen carrying their eggs, which bear some degree of resemblance to small seeds. So that when Solomon said, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise," and again, "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer,"—he was but doubtfully correct; while Virgil, Horace, and Milton, who all three speak of the ant as providing for the future, did but stamp a mistaken notion with authority.

10. Especially rich and abounding with such examples of animal emblems are heraldry and mythology. Dating its existence from the days of chivalry, the tournaments, and the crusades, it is most natural that heraldry should abound with symbols, especially of martial courage and generosity,—in the lion, to wit. Sometimes the entire creature is introduced, sometimes only the upper half, but in either case the significance is the same. The horse, in similar manner, being famed for its courage and docility, for its fleetness and noble beauty, was in ancient or genuine heraldry identified with what was commanding and illustrious. Other animals appear as memorials or emblems of the chase, which, in the feudal times was the chief pastime of the nobles, as well as of royalty. Hence the fre-

quent recurrence of the stag, or, quite as frequently, of its antlered head. Herein we have testimony to the importance which stag-hunting had acquired in the days of the Plantagenets. It is worthy also of note that the heraldic representations of the stag are much more natural or zoological than those of exotic animals, as illustrated so particularly in the beautiful attitude heraldically termed "at gaze," the creature being represented as when suddenly aroused, the head erect, and the four feet planted firmly upon the ground. The fox appears in heraldry both in connection with the chase, and as the emblem of wit and dexterity, which, in ambassadors, to whom it was assigned, are qualities of far more importance than strength and valour. Some may here demur that the fox is noted for cunning, and cite the celebrated scriptural passage, "Go, tell that fox." This is quite true. But the apparent inconsistency is no more than occurs in every other department of symbolism, and indicates merely how an object may be made to stand either for the better side of its character, or for the worse. For every animal, like every human being, has its good as well as its evil side. Heraldry never uses any but the former, finding its precedent in the Divine teaching that we should always look first, and if possible, look only and permanently, at the *good* side, a principle enunciated also in the admonition to be "wise as serpents." Dogs, like lions and

stags, are likewise very common in heraldry, partly in connection with the chase, partly as emblems of fidelity,—that beautiful feature which is the soul of the most charming incident of the *Odyssey*. The boar also appears frequently, and always in connection with the chase, of which it is an admirable symbol, boar-hunting having been a favourite sport with the adventurous from time immemorial. A boar's head, erect, commemorating the bringing of it in as a present to the lady of the castle, is common upon the shields of old families, and has a prototype in that fine episode in *Ovid*, where Meleager presents his trophy to the beautiful Atalanta.

"Illi lætitiae est cum munere, muneris auctor."

11. Similarly, in heraldry, as everywhere else where symbolism is observed, the camel represents endurance; the ass also endurance, with patience super-added; the elephant justice and caution, with dignity and calmness; the hedgehog sagacity in self-protection; the beaver great industry and ingenuity as a workman; the badger (originally called a "brock," and borne as a crest by the ancient family of Brooke) peculiar address and courage in self-defence. The bull, on the other hand, represents strength and fecundity. The cornucopæ of the ancients, a horn pouring forth flowers and fruit, was an elegant poetical hieroglyph of this creature's fertility, and of the value of oxen and cows

to the human race; the horn, or *cornu*, being that of the bull, and the *copiae*, or plenteousness of flowers and fruit, the condensed symbol or emblem of the sweet and abounding charities of the earth.

12. Birds, like quadrupeds, enter largely into heraldry, thus into the alphabet of emblems. Foremost stands the eagle, which holds a place corresponding to that of the lion, being the king of birds, as the lion is of four-footed creatures. The Romans had their eagles, and when the empire was divided into the western and the eastern, two heads were given to the bird, as retained to this day in the double eagle of the monarchies of central Europe. Napoleon adopted the same symbol as that of the Cæsars. Falconry and hawking, like the chase, were in past ages the cause of the frequent use of the birds from which these sports were named, for purposes similar to those of the stag. The hawk is also an emblem of boldness and quick-sightedness. Contrariwise, the owl, consecrated by antiquity to Minerva, is famous for its vigilance and prudence, and is the natural emblem of these two good qualities; while the cock, always armed *cap-à-pie*, is the symbol of a ready soldier. All these devices enter spiritedly and emphatically into heraldry, and beautifully illustrate that the science so denominated is not, as some weakly imagine, a matter simply of pedigrees, a something concerned only with family history, and the pride of armorial

blazon upon a carriage; but a science which considered as to its true nature, lies parallel with the highest forms of philosophy, based, as it is on the grand and immutable fact that every object and phenomenon in the world of nature is an emblem or representative of something either *in man* or enacted by man. Even *fishes* appear in heraldry, as exemplified in the dolphin, the representative of philanthropy, and identified for all time with the famous fable of Arion,—one of those grand old stories which, rightly interpreted, show us that when we speak of truth and fiction, we refer to one mode of truth and to *another* mode of truth,—to two ways of putting a single verity, and not by any means to truth and *falsehood*.

13. And thus are we led to that second great repository of the emblematic natures and symbolism of animals,—mythology. All the creatures which appear in heraldry, and in the symbolism of art, Christian as well as classical, have fine histories lying far back in ancient mythology. Take, for instance, the horse, bestowed on man by Neptune, and the famous legend of Pegasus. There is a reason for every one of the metamorphoses recorded by Ovid; reason is pleased to interpret them, and finds nutriment in the doing, though half-reason may stand uninterested and mocking. This subject, however, is so extensive, that it can here only be indicated. For the present it must suffice to say,

that it was the intuitive apprehension of such harmonies and correspondences as have been spoken of, which in the primæval ages emerged in the fables of the transformations of men and women into various lower shapes of life, quadrupeds, birds, and fishes; also in the doctrine of metempsychosis, and a multitude of other curious fancies, erroneous, indeed, in certain aspects, but which are no more without their disguised truthfulness, than the hues of Aurora can paint the sky unless a sun be shining below the horizon.

## CHAPTER III.

### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PLANTS AND FLOWERS.

14. LET us proceed to the beautiful and multitudinous analogies which subsist between the nature and attributes of man and the *vegetable* kingdom. So conspicuous are they, that in all ages trees and flowers have been pointed to by the moralist and selected by the poet, as yielding the most eloquent illustrations. No objects are so frequently used for similes and metaphors by the inspired writers; and the Great Teacher Himself has testified to their symbolic value, by continually selecting them to illustrate His divine lessons. "Consider the lilies." "Do men gather grapes of thorns?" "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." "The harvest truly is plenteous." "I am the true vine." Compare also the parable of the sower; the parable of the tares and wheat; the parable of the fig-tree indicating summer, all which sacred fables are founded upon some analogy between human life and plant life.

15. The source of a part, at least, of this extensive analogy, is undoubtedly to be found in the close relationship which subsists between animals and plants as living beings. Inorganic matter being destitute of vitality, no such recondite

resemblances as those which accompany life can, of necessity, be beheld anywhere save in these two great kingdoms of nature. Their possession of life brings them into affinity, not only by reason of the vast distance to which it removes them from every shape of lifeless matter, but from the very nature of the bond itself. Produced in the same mysterious manner ; inheriting life, and in turn communicating life, under the same inscrutable and unfailing law ; equally dependent on food, air, and light for the support of their existence, and yielding up that existence under circumstances physiologically identical—in every particular connected with organic existence, animals and plants are complete counterparts of one another. Marvellous would it be, then, if plants should fail to speak of man, rather than that they should be so prodigal of emblems of him.

16. When old Homer saw the rise and decay of man pictured in the successive generations of the “leaves of trees :” when the inspired Hebrews contemplated human life in “the flower of the field” and in “grass ;” and when Shakspere saw in the “sere and yellow leaf” the emblem of the evening of our existence,—what truth and matchless beauty must they have discerned in these analogies for the verses in which they speak of them to have become “household words” for all the ages ! The analogy of the birth, life, and death of plants

with the corresponding circumstances in the history of our own species, whether we use it to illustrate the succession of one family or generation to another, or the biography simply of an individual, can hardly fail, however, to present itself to every thoughtful mind. Hence the numberless instances in literature where the precocious development, the late maturity, the vigorous old age, and the early death of individuals full of promise, are described by references to the parallel events continually observable in the vegetable world. In the "Telemaque" of Fenelon, for instance; in the "Numa Pompilius" of Florian; in Chatterton, and in the "Atala" of Chateaubriand. The last-mentioned is a passage of singular beauty. The weeping mother consoles herself for the loss of her babe by looking upon flower-buds which die before they expand, and thus do not become subject to the adversities of life. "Why do I weep for thee in thy cradle of earth, O my new-born? When the little bird becomes great, he must seek his own food, and in the wilderness he will find many bitter seeds. Thou at least hast known no tears; thy heart at least has not been exposed to the destroying breath of man. The bud which dries in its covering passes away with all its perfumes, like thee, O my son, and with all thy innocence. Happy are they who die in infancy; they are ignorant of all save the smiles and caresses of a mother." The germ of a

similar lamentation occurs in Shakspere, where the poor queen exclaims of her murdered sons :—

“ Ah, my poor princes ! ah, my tender babes !  
My unblown flowers ! ”

17. The same circumstance explains the frequent use which is made in the Scriptures of flourishing trees as emblems of the “ righteous man.” “ He shall be like a tree planted by the water side, that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither.” “ The righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree, and shall spread abroad like a cedar in Lebanon.” “ How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side : as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters.” “ Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river. He shall not see when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green ; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

18. On another part of the same general analogy is based the famous allegory in St. Paul, where the death and resurrection of man are explained under the emblem of the decay of plants in autumn, and their reappearance in the spring. Strictly speak-

ing, the analogy does not extend to the resurrection, as it is not the *same* plant which rises in the spring, but a new one. The beautiful appearance however, of new plants rising as if from the decayed remains of their own former leaves and flowers, rendered the comparison quite as appropriate to the occasion on which it was used, as if it were an actual scientific reality. It is curious to find that the very same subject should have been used by one of the heathen poets to illustrate his contrary belief, namely, in the celebrated elegy by Moschus on the death of his friend Bion (himself an accomplished poet), so beautifully imitated by Horace.

19. This, however, is only one of numberless instances that might be cited of the same object having two entirely different emblematic meanings. It does not follow, that because different, they must needs be contradictory. The argument of the old Greek poet is correct as regards the physical resuscitation of man in the present world; and in this sense alone, from his ignorance of revealed truth, it is but fair to suppose him to have intended his comparison. A paraphrase of his verses is actually sung as a hymn by certain orthodox Christian congregations! That this is the true sense of the passage is rendered further probable by the use of nearly the same words in Job,—“For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though

the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth buds like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away ; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ? ”

20. As another example of two or more emblematic meanings inhering in the same object, take the clinging of ivy to ruins or to an aged tree, universally regarded as the emblem of a sincere and lasting friendship. This is the idea which first occurs to us. But it also represents the clinging of a good reputation to a man’s name, such being a conjunction quite as lasting, and quite as truly pictured in the bright evergreen. Unhappily, a reputation for evil no less than for good frequently attaches to a man’s name, and as Juvenal long ago observed, is often more enduring. But to use the ivy as an emblem for an evil reputation would be incorrect. The thorns and the thistles which we often see upon ruins form the proper emblem of such a connection as this ; for though the wallflower, a plant no larger, and not much more conspicuous, becomes, when growing in such situations, the emblem of friendship faithful in the most extreme adversity, thorns and thistles being familiarly associated with evil, convey there, as well as in other places, the idea correspondent to their unlovely nature. So that it is not merely the place of growth, but the ideas naturally pre-associated

with the plant, on independent grounds, which convert it into a fitting emblem.

21. But though prone to regard these and other plants of like nature as *bad*, we have no right to judge them with harshness. They have been formed for some wise, though it may be, hidden purpose, just as a certain amount of sorrow is seemingly attached by the Creator to the mortal condition of man, the truth being that we should not be men were we unpossessed of the affections which render us capable of grief. The classification of plants by such an imaginary standard as the dictate of our opinion, has an exact parallel in the estimates which we form in youth of our fellow-men. For then we estimate their characters abstractedly, referring all cases that may come before us to some vague standard of right and wrong, which if not solely the offspring of the fancy, is founded at the best on our predilections for some particular person or persons in whom a given quality may be present. No allowance is made for difference of temperament,—none for inaptitude for certain forms of social, intellectual, or moral action which *we* may admire, but which in *them* are subordinate to forms of good uncared for by ourselves. The motives by which they are actuated, the feelings and passions by which they are impelled, the ends they have in view, the circumstances by which they may be trammelled, are seldom or never considered. But as our minds open, we see that

difference does not imply demerit, and become satisfied that in the general scheme of creation all qualities, forms, and characters, whether human or otherwise, have an intrinsic value and a specific use ; and are assured that all have been created with a special object. We may frequently be unable to perceive, or even to speculate on the precise nature of the utilities which are answered, but we become fully conscious that there *are* such utilities. What may be the ultimate purpose of these seemingly useless creations we are still less able to discover. That matters but little ; the reverent mind is content to feel that they are portions of the all-comprehending and harmonious designs of a Providence which cannot work unwisely, and which *must* work beneficially. It is well that we are oftentimes constrained to rest in this conviction, since it constitutes so grand an argument for faith in the reality of things spiritual, and teaches us how to believe in the promises. Happy the day when men shall always begin their inquiries with asking for the *good* points instead of for the faults and blemishes. To do otherwise is to confess to anything but an amiable disposition ; since to be always on the look-out for defects, and to dwell upon them when detected, requires and implies self-conceit if not malice. It is far easier for an ill-natured man than for a good-natured one to be smart and witty upon another's failings. He who so deals with

what is weak, betrays even greater weakness in himself. Besides, if we consider a person to be wrong or mistaken (where a palpable moral principle is not involved), the least we can do, in common fairness, is to cross over, for a while, to the side on which *he* considers the subject; for his view of it is probably right upon *that* side. Admitting to him that *he* is right so far, he will be satisfied with the acknowledgment that he was not wrong in his judgment; and now, if *he* be really in the wrong, we can show to him that he was inadvertent in not asking for and considering both sides. Perhaps it was we ourselves who forgot to do so.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PLANTS AND FLOWERS.

(*Continued.*)

22. ANOTHER pleasing example of two or more emblematic meanings being supplied by the same object, is found in the *seed* of a plant. For while the apostle uses a seed to represent the resurrection of man, it no less beautifully illustrates what great things may arise from minute beginnings. Were it not a matter of every-day observation, who could conceive it possible that the delicate kernel which lies concealed within the stone of a cherry, plum, or damascene,—a prison-cell so fast that for the most attenuate fibre to escape seems hopeless,—who could conceive it possible that that delicate little thing is capable of growing into a large tree, to be covered in due time with leaves and fruit ! Trite and common-place as the subject may appear, a fine analogy is here presented to our contemplation ; holding equally good, too, whether we meditate on the correspondence between the growth of an oak-tree from the acorn, and the acquisition of fame and wealth by an individual who was poor and inconspicuous in his early days ; or whether we regard the analogy of a

thistle's or a deadly-nightshade's origin in a seed almost invisible, with the disgrace and ruin which often result from yielding to one small temptation. It affords a fine lesson, again, in teaching that if we would possess moral and intellectual flowers, we must sow the seeds of such flowers; and that if in the earlier days of our path through life we prefer to plant the germs of useless or noxious weeds, we can blame no one but ourselves for the result,—life, as regards its happiness or discomfort, being in great measure made so by every one for himself. The most exalted application of the beautiful fact in question, namely, that the noblest of trees as well as the humblest of weeds originate in an embryo scarcely visible, is the citing in the gospel, of the grain of mustard-seed, and its growth, to exemplify the development of heaven in the heart of man. It is a grand illustration, too, of the practice of our Lord as to the mode of giving forth his Divine truths, which is always in living symbols, without definition, and without proof.

23. In their marvellous vitality, enduring as it does, for ages, seeds present another emblem of exceeding beauty. For what can more exactly represent a determined and irrepressible purpose, though circumstances may hinder its accomplishment for a time, than seeds which still retain their vegetative power though buried in the earth for centuries? Grains of wheat that have been imprisoned in a

mummy-case for three thousand years, Schleiden tells us, will grow when they are planted. Whether this be true or not, instances of vitality preserved for centuries are well known to the philosophical observer of Nature.

24. It is from associations and analogies such as those indicated, that the "Language of Flowers" has arisen; emblems of all the diversities of disposition, the aptitudes and the sentiments of human nature, both good and evil, being presented in one species of plant or another. It is a sublime fact for the genuine student of nature, that when he has learned all he cares to learn regarding the structure and the physiology of plants, he may find among their various forms prefigurations of his moral and intellectual powers and tendencies. The language of flowers, as given in the little popular works on the subject, must, however, be received with great caution, the compilers, in haste to complete their lists, having often imposed arbitrary ideas, thus obscuring the true principle. Much of it, at the same time, is eminently correct and beautiful, as when grass is set down as the emblem of utility, the white violet as that of modesty, and the chamomile-plant as that of energy and patience in adversity. The peculiarity of this last is that the more, within reasonable limits, that it is trampled, so much the more does it spread and flourish. The nettle, after the same manner, is fitly made the

emblem of cruelty ; the balsam of impatience, no plant discharging its seeds with equal quickness; the woodbine stands for devoted affection ; the cow-slip for pensiveness ; the rest-harrow for obstacles in the way of doing good. What a beautiful picture is supplied again in an aged apple-tree, gray with the unmelting frost of lichens, able no longer to repeat those grand and heavy crops which once were the delight of our Septembers ! Here we see the emblem of the dignified, though now decrepit and silent old man, who for threescore years has been the benefactor of his race, and the joy and the reverence of his household. Contrariwise, the poppies among the wheat, the blue-bottles, and the gay corn-marigolds remind us of ~~useless~~ adjectives and epithets in a discourse, oramenting it, no doubt, but encumbering without really enriching. Trees, which like the mulberry, refrain from putting forth their leaves till there is no more danger to be apprehended from spring frosts, are legitimately reckoned emblems of prudence : those which dwell on the mountains, which have leaves like spears, and defy the wrath of storms,—the illustrious pines, remind us of heroism. Linnæus, fully alive to these analogies, when he remodelled the nomenclature of his favourite science, frequently took the opportunity of bestowing the names of botanists upon plants in which he perceived similarities of disposition, or emblems of character.

Petiver, for instance, he has inseparably associated with garlic, by giving his name to the *Petiveria alliacea*, a plant of no beauty, and having the scent of the *Allium sativum*. Sir John Hill has his epitaph in the *Hillia parasitica*; and Francisco Hernandez, who had abundant opportunities, but turned them to little account, is commemorated in the *Hernandia*, which though a large tree, possessing ample foliage, and inhabiting the finest of climates, yields nothing of any value. Linnæus would almost seem to have derived his idea from the anecdote told of an ancient philosopher, who one day hearing an orator making a sounding speech, in which he promised all sorts of fine things to the people, exclaimed "Methinks I now see a cypress-tree : in its leaves, in its branches, in its height, it is beautiful; but alas ! it bears no fruit."

25. The cypress and the yew-tree, partly from their longæval nature, partly from their unfading green, which is symbolical of immortality, are chosen in a kindred spirit, as the most appropriate of all trees for planting in cemeteries. While, however, Christians select these trees as emblems of immortality, the ancients planted them, as well as the elm, beside their tombs, because they appeared to yield no harvest of any value. What a commentary on their need of revelation !

26. In all of these usages we have further illustrations of different emblematic meanings being attached

to the same object, and yet with perfect propriety when the philosophy of their application is investigated. Without intending a special reference to the emblems last alluded to, perhaps the explanation of the ready way in which almost every object furnishes a duality of emblems—the one cheerful, the other sad—may be found in that deep moral of life which shows perpetually that the mournful is inseparable from the joyous. “In all natural harmonies—the flow of the river, the whispering of trees in the moonlight, the sound of the wind as it bends the reeds, and of the reeds as they answer, the ripple of the sea on the beach, nay even in the cheerful singing of the birds,—there is an undertone of sadness. So is there a soul of melancholy underlying all the things and events of earth. As the shadow which beauty lets fall is dark—as the echo of even glad sounds is like a sigh,—so by the side of our dearest affections and brightest hopes and best enjoyments ever walks a veiled presence.” According to our mood at the moment, we see the joyous side or the sad one, and the emblem is translated in accordance with our emotion. The consciousness of these things has no affinity with the affectations of the mere sentimentalist. They are intimately associated with the recognition of all those other high and elevating truths which, however promotive they may be of mournfulness in regard to their first appeal, subsequently bring

home to our hearts a deep and enduring cheerfulness. Truths educed from the quiet contemplation of nature and of real life must ever be cheerful, though they may have tears upon them, just as in the eventide of the year, when the leaves are dropping around us, and the sunbeams fall cold and languidly, a sensation of thankful pleasurableness still comes bubbling up in the heart, unconsciously to brighten everything, and show that there is a silver lining to every cloud. Though the heart may not unfrequently detect a sigh in its intercourse with life, when educated aright it may always recognise a smile. But the latter to the creature of mere sentiment is a "lost ideal;" and hence the true lover of thought and nature not only enjoys the positive delight inevitable to the attitude of his mind, but knows nothing of the fancied misery which incessantly afflicts the other. A mere sentimental can never be a poet, in the genuine meaning of the word, for cheerfulness is an integral element of all true poetry; and though the poet may occasionally say of himself—

"As tints fall down upon October leaves,  
Brilliant and many-hued, yet touched with sadness,  
So are the summer fancies of my mind  
Chequered with thoughts more wintry;"

yet spring and summer are so intimately blended with his nature that they unfailingly return to him. That is but a sickly tree which is not verdant

for the chief part of the year; and that must be a dreary sky indeed which never shows a rainbow. The power to cultivate a happy and hopeful spirit, which all may do, in less or greater measure, is more precious to its possessor than gold and rubies. It is an immense consolation to know that as soon as we have something to suffer, we have something to hope: wise people are always full of hope,—mind, not of *illusion*, but of *reasonable* hope, finding it upon self-reliance, which, when reasonable, is reliance upon God. He who believes in God steadily and calmly, and not as a mere sayer of prayers, is necessarily an optimist. He knows that the munificence which has filled the earth with light and warmth will always be accomplishing the best in every way, and that he will not be, and cannot be an actual sufferer. What we call evil is perhaps just the shape which, for our position and circumstances at the moment, can alone be assumed by that which is best for us. It is good, at all events, so to believe; and if we are wise, when so placed, we just cover up the grave, as robins might do, with the leaves of content. It is better than moaning and wondering fretfully why Providence so wounds or bereaves us. The greatest honour, it has been well said, that we can pay to the Author of our being is to live such a cheerful life as discloses a mind satisfied with His dispensations. “If one should give me a dish of sand,” writes one of God’s true priests, “and tell

me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes, and search for them with my clumsy fingers, and be unable to detect them ; but let me take a magnet and sweep through it, and how would it draw to itself the almost invisible particles ! The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies. But let the thankful heart sweep through the day ; and as the magnet finds the iron, so will it find in every event some heavenly blessing. Only the iron in God's sand is gold." Why men are so disposed to be unsatisfied is that they are too apt to consider the dark sides of what they possess, and the bright sides of their neighbour's possessions and of things out of their reach. Depend upon it, the best things for us are those we have got. Indulging hopes too sanguine respecting the pleasures we hope to acquire, we fall into indifference towards those we possess, and so lose both : scorning a thousand little enjoyments at hand, we are prone to keep waiting and waiting for something which perhaps we may never obtain, or which, when obtained, may change its complexion, and become distasteful. This is not wise : nature implores us to do differently ; happy the man who listens to her counsels, which are always to enjoy the present, as well as to be hopeful, fearing and loving God, thanking Him and trusting in His goodness.

## CHAPTER V.

### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PLANTS AND FLOWERS.

(*Concluded.*)

27. FEW things are at once more delightful to the eye, more interesting from their associations, and more richly emblematic to the vision of the mind, than TREES. Forming an immense proportion of the vegetable clothing of our planet, they exhibit the most astonishing diversities of form and aspect, and, when uninjured by vicissitude, stand the very embodiments of stateliness and beauty. Their uses are as varied as their looks. Food, medicine, clothing, shelter, are among the benefits which they directly confer; while indirectly may be ascribed to these fine gifts of God the countless blessings which result from commerce and the art of carpentry. Consider them how we will, trees present high and perennial claims upon our regard, and commend themselves as entitled alike to our admiration and to our scrutiny. It has already been stated that in the phenomena of their existence, in the laws of their development, decay, and reproduction, trees, like herbaceous plants, prefigure human nature, expressing the same ideas upon a

lower platform. Even their structure, to a certain extent, anticipates the human model. The leaves answer to the lungs and digestive organs; the blossoms and seed-pods prefigure all that is required by the institution of sex; they have "trunks," "arms," and "limbs;" and their slim, depending, and multitudinous twigs anticipate the locks and ringlets of the head. How graceful the tresses of the silver birch! How ladylike the whole tree! With the ash, the acacia, and the larch, this charming ornament of the woods foretells the delicacy and elegance of the female form; as the horse-chestnut, the oak, the elm, and the plane present the muscles and sturdiness of the masculine. Withheld from trees are only man's nobler organs, and the spiritual powers of which they are the instruments: and this because, like plants and flowers in general, they are destined for a lower sphere of being, and to subserve purposes and uses for which a nature higher than the simply vegetative would render them unfit.

28. From the circumstances of their variety, elegance, and utility, from the phenomena also of their development and structure, it is easy to see that in the great volume of natural and spiritual harmonies trees answer to the faculties, powers, and possessions of the mind. This is in no way inconsistent with the fact of trees being representative of man's *animal* nature, seeing that man is at once the im-

personation of mind, and the only material creature by which it can be possessed.

29. The word "tree" actually means mind or intellect, being one of those fine natural metaphors which we use day by day without ever suspecting their significance, or the high and splendid relations on which they rest. Etymologically, "tree" is cognate with *treowan*, the Anglo-Saxon word for to trust, prove, or verify, and thus to think, or to have knowledge or perception of. *Treowan* still survives in the latter sense, in our word to "trow," i.e. to think or believe. True, truth, and trust, are sister terms; "truth" being that of which we are confidently assured; "trust" that which we entertain from mental conviction. Literally, these things are "trees" of the mind, each one of them possessing its strong and vigorous stem, with branches and leaves appended. The Hebrew word for tree (*otz*) is remarkably coincident, denoting literally that which is firm, strong, or well-established,—qualities naturally identified with truth. To the same family of terms belongs the Greek name for the oak, *δρυς*, possibly as being the tree considered peculiarly emblematic of knowledge or intellect. *Δρυς*, however, in its sense of "oak," may be the restriction of a name originally generic, and thus precisely equivalent to "tree."

30. As with all other correspondences, the finest examples of those between trees and the mind of man

are furnished in Scripture. Whatever we may learn from other sources is here almost invariably illustrated and confirmed. Sometimes "forests" are named, these being put for the intellect in the collective. Thus, when every thought and faculty is called on to join in blessing and praising God for his salvation of the world, the language is, "Break forth into singing, O forest, and every tree therein, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob!" There would be little purpose in making such an appeal to insensate objects, if an ulterior meaning were not intended. The personifications of Scripture are not like those of merely human poetry. The former always involve a direct reference to human nature; the latter are addressed simply to the objects, and to the influences they exert upon poetic souls. When we turn to God, and believe on Him, it is said that "all the trees of the forest shall clap their hands." Here are portrayed the delight and animation which fill the mind when it opens to the understanding of His will and dealings. These also are the "trees of the wood" which it is said "shall rejoice at the presence of the Lord." If man turns *away* from God, and lets his mind dwell on what is foreign and opposed to heavenly things, it is said, on the other hand, that "the glory of his forest shall consume, and the trees shall be few, so that a child may count them." Here we now perceive a meaning. Before there was none. So beautifully does the law of cor-

respondence act, making that speak which previously was silent, and giving life to that which was dead.

31. There are many such examples even in secular compositions, but they differ from those of Scripture in always being isolated. Shelley, for instance, speaks of

“—— a wood of sweet sad thoughts.”

The author of “Festus” refers to men

“Whose rich dark ivy thoughts, sunn'd o'er with love,  
Flourish around the deathless stems of their names.”

And again, in language wonderfully suggestive, he talks of others

“Who shed great thoughts  
As easily as an oak casteth its golden leaves  
In kindly largess to the soil it grows on.”

32. When particular kinds of trees are cited in Scripture, it is in reference to specific powers, qualities, or attitudes of the mind, the allusions preserving a uniform significance throughout. It is the tree department of the “language of flowers” in its highest and noblest use. Herein is provided accordingly a certain key to the meaning of all texts where a given tree is mentioned, every instance illustrating and confirming every other.

33. Take for example, the olive, the vine, and the fig. The olive has from time immemorial been identified with peace, forgiveness, charity, recon-

ciliation, and similar high attitudes of virtue. The ancients used its branches on all occasions where friendship was sought to be conciliated and forgiveness granted; and a modification of its name was used by the Greeks to denote gentleness, sympathy, and mercy. The tree was *ελατα*, the virtues were *ελεος*. The vine has in like manner been identified in all ages with wisdom and intelligence. Here again the Greek language furnishes an apposite and striking illustration; *σοφια*, the Greek name for intellect or wisdom, signifying in its primitive though disused sense, the juice of the grape. The uses to which the fig has been and is still symbolically applied, in the countries where it grows freely, indicate a perception of its original relation to the lower faculties and tendencies of our nature. It was not from accident that fig-leaves were chosen for the first dresses upon record; nor from caprice that the fig-tree was made sacred to Priapus, and its branches and fruit carried in the phallic processions. All the statements and usages adverted to are borne out by the metaphorical citations of the several trees in philosophy as well as in poetry.

34. These three trees are of the *fruit-bearing* class. Nothing is more obvious than that trees fall into two natural classes; namely, those which, however valuable for other purposes, yield hard and juiceless seed-pods, unfit for food; and those which produce juicy and eatable fruits. While all trees corres-

pond to mental and intellectual things primarily, the former answer more intimately to the invisible faculties,—as thought, reflection, and faith; the latter, or the fruit-bearing kinds, to the bringing out of their correspondent mental essences into visible acts or works. Hence the activities of human nature are in Scripture perpetually denoted by fruit-trees, and by these three in particular. The references to them are more abundant than to any of the other class, and this because Scripture addresses itself, as its chief theme, to the *acts* of man, rather than to his *thoughts*,—to the practice or *fruits* of religion, rather than to the inactive *knowledge* of it. “God shall render unto every man according to his *deeds*.” The olive is put for whatever springs from the exercise of his moral sentiments; the vine is used to denote the expression of his intellectual powers; the fig for the deeds of his sensuous nature. Sometimes they are used in reference to the perversion of these activities, there being nothing in human nature but what may be applied to an evil use, in place of its original legitimate one. The triple constitution thus recognised has nothing hypothetical about it, being a fundamental and admitted fact in all true metaphysics. Nor is the abundance of these fruits in Syria, and their commercial and domestic value to the inhabitants, the sole reason, as some may suppose, of their frequent mention. Certainly the word of God was constructed, as to its letter, in

reference to the features and productions of that country; but nothing can be supposed to be mentioned in a Divine gift to all nations, which is of simply local interest.

35. With these facts before us, we perceive why olive-wood was used, under the Jewish dispensation, in many of those representative structures and implements whereby a life of Christian deeds was denoted; and why olive-oil was used in the consecration of persons, and even of utensils, dedicated to the service of God. In the New Testament  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\sigma$  is continually used to denote the Christian virtues of mercy, forgiveness, etc. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," is literally, "Blessed are the *olive-givers*, for *olives* shall be given them." The word "alms" is a derivative of this identical  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\sigma$ , and thus denotes in its essence olive giving. "Alms" are so called, because the outward symbol and representative of the Christian life. The vine and its products, as grapes and wine (which wine "maketh glad the heart of man," as olive oil "maketh his face to shine"), express in similar manner and extent the good deeds which result, under God's guidance, from *intellectual* perceptions. Hence too the frequent allusions to "vineyards," which refer to the aggregate of such perceptions, and to their productiveness when rightly ordered and attended to. Our Lord calls himself "the true vine," to show that in him alone resides genuine

truth or wisdom. What could be more admirable as a delineation of such truth, in its energy and glory, than the psalmist's exhibition of it under the figure of "a vine brought out of Egypt"? "Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou didst cause it to take root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river." What, on the other hand, could be more mournful and expressive than the picture of apostasy and infidelity conveyed in the succeeding verses, which describe the "vine" as torn down and trampled on?—"the bear out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it." Well may the Divine mercy be supplicated to "return, look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine," a solemn and impressive lesson that when the mind is corrupted by false teachings, God alone can restore it to order.

36. The walnut, ash, and mulberry correspond in similar manner to the qualities of prudence and discretion, beautifully expressed in their delaying to put forth their leaves till the danger of spring frosts is wholly past. The balsam-trees correspond with sympathy; the orange-tree is the emblem of a happy and fruitful marriage; the willow represents sadness and mourning. Hence the hanging of their harps upon the willows by the captive Israelites;

hence again Shakspere's unspeakably beautiful introduction of this tree, in his description of the unhappy, forsaken Dido :—

“In such a night  
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand,  
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waved her love  
To come again to Carthage.”

37. Doubtless it is the primitive accordance of particular kinds of trees with particular qualities of the mind and affections of the heart, as above briefly exemplified, which originates men's admiration of one species and indifference towards another. One prefers the oak, another the birch, another the elm; each giving his love to the kinds which he feels to be the counterparts of ingredients in his own being, though what may be the nature of the relation he cannot tell. Doubtless, also, the diversified forms and attitudes of trees are phenomena resulting from their primitive relations to man. For all material objects and appearances are effects or results, not independent creations; and all have reference to something in the human soul, which is at once the image and likeness of God, and nature spiritually epitomized. The oak is pyramidal, the birch pendulous, the cypress spire-like, not from mere exercise of invention on the part of the almighty framer of all, with a view to illustrating how large a variety could be produced from a given type of vegetable, but because they are the natural and

determinate expressions of antecedent spiritual essences. In this present life these sublime relations are almost wholly undiscoverable, because a nobler wisdom than our mortal one is needed to perceive and read them. But when we enter into the enjoyment of that wisdom, we shall learn the significance of every shape and every aspect, and find on every spray, leaves of an endless book of knowledge and delight. If astronomy, as some suppose, is to form one of the amenities of the future, surely so will botany. Even now, what a lovely object of contemplation becomes forest or woodland scenery, luxuriating in everything that is tasteful in design and tint, when viewed as the depiction, such as it really is, of an aspiring and heavenly soul. Viewing it so, we perceive, in a minute and finite measure, how such a soul must appear to the eyes of God; and what an engaging and powerful inducement does this become to seek His aid in planting such a landscape in ourselves!

38. We go into woods and forests when we would meditate. Why is this? Because of the felt harmony of the trees with our inmost being, and of the beautiful sympathy they seem to hold with the thoughts and feelings we love to dwell upon and cherish. It is not simply because the woods are lonely that we go there at such times. Indeed, few places are less lonely than the woods, when the soul is up and stirring, and keen to hear the voices and catch

the glances of the dear old friends amongst which it there finds itself. There is far profounder loneliness in the streets of a great strange city—

“The crowd is safer than the silent wood,  
Where love's own thoughts disturb the solitude.”

Quintilian found so much in the tranquillity of the woods to interrupt the meditations which he carried thither, that when he would pursue them unbrokenly, he was fain to stay at home. But however it may be with certain subjects of thought, there is yet no place where, as a rule, the mind is felt to open itself out more deliciously and gratefully than under the shade and influence of the woods; and the oftener we go, the more kindly is their encouragement. “In the woods a man casts off his years as the snake his slough; and, at whatever period of life, is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods we return to reason and faith: there I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity, which (leaving me my eyes) nature cannot repair. With the trees I am not alone and unacquainted: they nod to me, and I to them.” Because of these elegant facts, there are, to the lover of nature, few greater privations than to be detained from the

frequent sight and intercourse of trees. The woods, like the waves on the sea shore, seem identified with his very existence, claiming intimate companionship with all his happiest emotions.

"Though caged in this close town, my thoughts still are  
To visit thy green fields and pensive woods,  
And rivulets that chant their lonely ditties  
In the sleepy ear of summer; and the sea  
That talks for ever to the quiet sands."

39. No wonder that the lively fancy of the ancients led them to assign to every wood its dryads, and to every tree its nymph. It was but impersonating the sweet influences which abide and will for ever abide in their smiling and musical solitudes. One of the prettiest allusions to the dryads is that in the Metamorphoses, where they are described as dancing round a fine old oak-tree, its branches hung with votive garlands. How beautiful, too, are the curious legends preserved by the poet, of the transformation into trees of human beings; and how full of fine poetic meaning would they doubtless become to us, could we translate their original intent! That they had a deep and instructive significance is plain from the story of Appulus, who was changed, it is said, into a wild olive.

"Quippe notam linguae baccis oleaster amaris  
Exhibet."

"Its bitter fruit records the infamy of his tongue."

Some of the Italian poets have resuscitated the idea

with remarkable beauty and success, as Ariosto, who describes Alcina charming men into olive-trees, beeches, and palms.

40. It was by reason of such feelings as those above alluded to, and others of kindred quality, that religious worship was anciently celebrated in woods, and that groves and trees were consecrated, primarily to God, and afterwards to the deities of mythology. The latter were supposed to frequent them as favourite haunts; rivers and fountains receiving their alternate visits. Cybele, for instance, in Virgil, speaks of a place so chosen by her,—

“Pinea silva mihi multos dilecta per annos.”

“A pine-wood beloved by me through many years.”

41. The deep; yet cheerful and serene solemnity which fills the arched and sacred pathways of the woods, and which infuses itself into our own minds as we penetrate their depths, is alone sufficient to excite emotions of piety and veneration. Abraham himself, it is said, “planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord.” This was the golden age of worship amid such sceneries and influences. But like everything else originally pure and holy, in time it became corrupted, and then we find it prohibited as sinful. For the Jews, who throughout their entire character and ritual were principled in externals and representatives,

soon made the practice an idolatrous one, and profaned what in itself was most pure and devout. Hence their later history affords frequent instances of Divine condemnation of the practice; while the prophets give warning to ourselves that we fall not into the same error. For it is grove and tree-worship fully as gross, when setting up our own understandings in opposition to the revealed law of God, we virtually deify the former. It is important to observe, however, in reference to these various passages, that the word "grove," sometimes denotes "idol" or graven image. In 1 Kings xiv. 23, and 2 Kings xvii. 10, for example, where, to make sense, "groves" should be corrected to "idols." It is said in both places, that "they set up images and *groves* under every green tree." The images were in honour of Baal, the idols in honour of Ashtoreth or Astarte. The Greeks consecrated groves not only to the heavenly, but to the infernal deities, as illustrated in the *Oedipus-at-Colonus* of Sophocles. Euripides makes frequent allusion to the former, as do Virgil and Ovid to the sacred groves of the Roman mythology, the latter usually speaking of them under the name of *lucus*. At first there were neither altars nor temples in these groves. Afterwards, it became customary to erect such structures within their shades; and in memory of this, when temples were built in other localities, it was a frequent practice

to surround them with trees, which were esteemed equally holy, and the coverts afforded by which were asylums and sanctuaries for the unfortunate. This custom was likewise perverted by the Jews, and forbidden accordingly: "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord." To cut down or injure the sacred groves, was an act of the grossest sacrilege. Hence perhaps, the stress of the Divine command to "cut down the groves" of idolaters. The Druids of Gaul, Germany, and Britain, retaining the image of the primeval custom, always sacrificed in the recesses of forests; and even the earlier Anglo-Saxons seem to have inherited the taste for it, from the fact of such procedures having been prohibited by Canute. Two traditions there are of this ancient and beautiful mode of worship which will never be lost;—the lofty and graceful columns which architecture learned to imitate amid the palms of the orient, the first use of which was consecrated to the temples of the gods; and secondly, the aisles and arches of the cathedrals of the west. Man could never have thought spontaneously of a style so sweet as that which he finds anticipated in the vistas of the woods. Who that has been in the heart of a venerable forest when the leaf-entangled sunbeams are filling it with the calm and tinted light of evening,—especially when Autumn has been busy with her

pencil,—who has not had all brought back to him when he has visited an old cathedral or abbey church, with its pillared roof, its meeting branches, delicate tracery, and soft and variegated colours? Man does well to adorn the temples of God with branches of trees, though it be but once a year. They not only preserve the memory of the origin of such buildings, but are in keeping with their object. In ancient times boughs of trees were largely used in the ceremonials of religion, being esteemed one of their most appropriate adjuncts. Tacitus informs us in his description of the consecration of the Capitol, after its repair by Vespasian, that the first part of the ceremony consisted in the soldiers entering with boughs of the trees in which the gods were supposed to take most delight. In the “feast of Tabernacles” olive branches were carried; the strewing of the ground with branches on the occasion of the entry into Jerusalem, was in conformity also with the same instinctive feeling.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM INANIMATE NATURE.

42. PASSING to inanimate nature, it is found quite as abounding in emblems as the organic portion. What, for instance, is more beautifully suggestive of the flying of time than the perpetual rolling of a river? This thought, so natural in itself from the readiness with which the resemblance addresses itself to the analogy-discerning faculty, has been expressed in verse by many of the poets, and can scarcely fail to have visited every reflective mind. It occurs in Ovid's Metamorphoses, in the Odes of Horace, in Young's Night Thoughts, and in Sir William Jones's translations from the Persian.

43. The analogy does not end here. For as Time witnesses the rise and decay, not only of generations of men, but of cities and kingdoms, yet rolls on just the same when all have passed away, so do rivers witness all the changes which attach to man and his performances, yet for ever glide along their courses, smoothly, grandly, irresistibly. Impressed with the beauty of the resemblance, a Spanish poet, speaking of ancient Rome, exclaims—

“Tiber alone endures, whose ancient tide  
Worshipped the queen of cities on her throne,

And now, as round her sepulchre, complains.  
O Rome! the steadfast grandeur of thy pride  
And beauty all are fled; and that alone  
Which seems so fleet and fugitive, remains!"

44. In the unceasing flow of a great river there is a solemn emblem also of the unimaginable duration of eternity; while in its majesty and irresistible power, Ossian sees a mighty hero who carries all before him. In "Comala," for instance—"Who comes like the strength of rivers, when their crowded waters glitter in the moon? Who is it but the foe of Comala?" And in "Carthon,"—"If he overcomes, I rush, in my strength, like the roaring streams of Cona." Even here the analogies of rivers do not end. Anything whatever that pursues a noble, onward, ceaseless course, incapable of arrest, has its emblem in a river. Hence in ancient times kings were sometimes anointed on the banks of running streams, because of the agreeable manner in which the latter harmonized with the idea of a happy, beneficent, and long-continued reign.

45. Ancient nations, a pleasing writer observes, "were accustomed to personify rivers, and to recognise in them a mysterious presence. To the Greeks, a river was in some measure a local seat of deity; by its waters the productive spirit diffused its influence; attributes of the universal divinity were ascribed to the same; and hence rivers became personified as of the immortal progeny of

Jupiter, the guardians of mortal man, and objects of his reverence and invocation. In the Homeric times, the nymphs seem to have been considered as guardian spirits or local deities of the springs and rivers, the companions of the river-gods who were accounted the male progeny of the ocean, though the mystic system gave them a more exalted genealogy. Next to the host of heaven, rivers seem from ancient times to have attracted a sort of grateful worship in the adjacent lands. Even in northern climates the gushing of a fresh stream seems like the presence of a living power, and the water is, as it were, the very soul of the landscape; but in Syria and the East, the life-giving power of running water is yet more strongly felt. To the Hebrews, springs were 'the eyes'—the bright glistening eyes—of the thirsty land; a sort of personality was given to the stream; it had its 'right hand,' as the estuary its 'lip,' and the bay its 'tongue.' On many a river in a sterile, mountainous region of Palestine, the spectator (as Dean Stanley remarks of the Barada on its course towards Damascus) literally stands between the living and the dead; for, bursting forth from a cleft in the rocky hills between two precipitous cliffs, the river, as if in a moment, scatters life and foliage over the plain, and the rushing flood of crystal water, overhung by willow, poplars, hawthorn, and walnut, sets an island of verdure in a framework of barren hills."

46. The analogies of rivers with the *events of life* have also furnished matter for many beautiful reflections. Johnson uses the flowing of a river to illustrate the vanity of human wishes, which are constantly passing away, yet as constantly returning; while in the Abbé Barthelemy's celebrated "Travels of Anacharsis," the prince is described, when sailing on the Peneus, as contemplating the succession of its waves, and regarding it as the image of a pure and tranquil soul, in which one virtue engenders another, and all act in peace and concert. Parnell, in "The Hermit," compares the circumstance of the good man's admitting doubts of the benevolence of Providence, to the effect of a stone thrown upon the surface of a placid stream, by means of which the water is broken into circles, which, nevertheless, in a few moments disappear.

"So when a smooth expanse receives impressed  
Calm nature's image on its watery breast,  
Down bend the banks, the trees depending grow,  
And skies beneath with answering colours glow.  
But if a stone the gentle scene divide,  
Swift ruffling circles curl on every side;  
And glimmering fragments of a broken sun,  
Banks, trees, and skies in thick disorder run."

The exceeding beauty and fitness of the comparison become still more manifest, when we reflect on the analogy which a river bears to human progress,

and which the natural objects bending over it bear to the influence of virtue and religion on the soul.

47. The familiar comparison of intense but silent feelings of affection to deep rivers, which indicate by their smoothness of surface how vast is the body of water, is quite as truthful to analogy as any of the above. Equally so is the companion emblem which streams, noisy because shallow, as continually afford of a love which abounds in words, but for the perennial flow of which there is little hope.

48. While travelling, yea, if only enjoying the sweets of a country ramble, it is important to note the course of even the smallest currents of water. We are often so absorbed in noting the wild-flowers, that this is forgotten. But they tell where the higher grounds are situated; on which hand most likely are the springs and sources, and on which side is the greater stream to which they are conveying tribute. Thus, too, should we note carefully, as we go along, whence our various ideas are flowing, and in which directions are they tending; do they come from Sion, or from Mars' hill; are they going towards the river of life, or towards one which we may desire were Lethe. So to think of the sources of our intellectual possessions quickens also the sense of gratitude,—one of the most delightful emotions a human soul can know.

49. Springs and fountains have quite as many meanings as streams and rivers. The most ancient, and, perhaps, the most beautiful idea associated with them is that of their being symbolical of Truth. "Of all the divinities that nature has discovered to the mind of man," says an old writer, "the most lovely is *Truth*. Her power is as great as her beauty, for, notwithstanding many conspire to overwhelm her, yet she never fails, by her own native energy, to make her way into the human mind. Sometimes she displays her power immediately; sometimes only after being a long time enveloped in darkness. She, nevertheless, surmounts every obstacle in the end, and triumphs over every error." As sublimely expressed in the book of Esdras, "she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages." Now, what in the material world can more beautifully correspond to this impersonation of a moral attribute than a limpid spring or fountain, bursting out of the bosom of the earth, and carrying happiness and genial influence wherever it makes its way? "I cannot," says Mrs. Butler (late Fanny Kemble), "describe my delight in living waters: these perpetually running fountains are a perpetual baptism of refreshment to my mind and senses. The Swedenborgians consider water, when the mention of it occurs in the Bible, as typical of truth. I love to think of that when I look at it, so bright, so pure, so transparent, so temperate, so fit an

emblem for that spiritual element in which our souls should bathe and be strengthened,—from which they should drink and be refreshed.”

50. In ancient times, it was the custom to throw chaplets and garlands of flowers into springs and fountains, as typical of the love and honour that were felt for them, though some of those who threw might do so thoughtlessly and without reverence. This explains the allusion in “*Comus*” to the sprinkling of the river Severn with flowers, though in this instance it is in special honour of Sabrina ;—

“The shepherds at their festivals  
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,  
And throw sweet garland-wreaths into her stream,  
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.”

Not that the usage is anywhere extant, unless, perhaps, in that modified form which survives at Tissington and Buxton, in Derbyshire, where at a certain period every year, in early summer, the wells and fountains which supply the inhabitants with water, are decorated with wreaths, chaplets, and floral devices, expressive of the self-same feelings as those which actuated the participants in the primæval *Floralia*.

51. So, in all ages, have men decorated truth with the mental flowers of love and approbation. For the very vilest love truth. Like water, it is indispensable even to the meanest. There is honour even among thieves. They feel that even crime and fraud

will not succeed unless they are true to one another. Virtue, says J. J. Rousseau, is so essential to our souls that when we have once abandoned that which is real, we presently fashion an image after the same model, and keep the more strongly attached to this substitute, because, perhaps, it is one of our own election.\* Taking the opposite of water, and its operation in the organic world, that is to say, drought and the parching of the soil, to the ruin of vegetation and the discomfort of living creatures, how powerfully are we reminded that falsehood is the essence of all sin, and that no true greatness can possibly co-exist with deceit. Yet we must not always, and exclusively, think of error and evil from the dreary side, any more than of the thorns and thistles as abominations. For without error, the *beau idéal* of truth, as an object of our search and reverence, could not be perfectly realized to the mind. It is the discrepancies between truth and error, evil and good, which startle us into inquiry, and which, if we be faithful to ourselves, put us in the way of obtaining accurate knowledge.

52. Were we to ask another emblem of springs and fountains, perchance their guardian nymphs might point to the furrowed stones and deeply-channelled bed, cut by the successive water-drops, and call upon us to observe that patience seldom fails to overcome at last; and that love and kindliness,

\* Eloisa, ii. 204.

though they may have a hard heart to battle with, need but persevere if they would subdue it.

53. The ocean, in its emblematic character, renews much of the finest portion of what other water expresses, and exhibits new meanings peculiarly its own. They are all, moreover, of the grandest character; for what can more sublimely express infinity, extent, duration, multitude, or the incessant activity of thought, than the vast realm of waters which wraps the globe—that “multitudinous sea” which for thousands of years has been rolling and tossing, reflecting the firmament in its edgeless mirror, and filling the minds of all mankind with awe, delight, and admiration? Hence Emerson has designated England’s greatest poet “the *oceanic Shakspere*.” Thrice happy epithet! For, as in looking at the sea, we are led in thought all round the world, so by Shakspere are we led to the contemplation of every possible aspect of that marvellous spherical thing, the human soul. It is often said that the sea divides countries and regions, that it separates friends and brothers. Not so; it unites them rather. The surface, though not so quickly, is more easily traversed than solid land; it is unbroken by mountains; no rivers require bridges; and, while the circling air has been truly said to make the whole world kin, equally true is this of the circling ocean. If the wind that soothes the shores of England comes impregnated with the

odours of tropical flowers, so does the wave that touches the margin of the western continent bring particles that may have brightened the shells on the sands of the eastern. This again justifies Emerson's epithet; and perhaps it may be true that intense love of the ocean, as an element of the world's scenery, rules in all great and classic minds, and similarly, that the test of a man's intellectual grasp is to be found in his appreciation of Shakspere.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM INANIMATE NATURE.

*(Continued.)*

54. WE have dwelt long on the emblems connected with water, in order to show how many may be found in even a single department of inanimate nature. A similar series of illustrations might as readily be given of the emblems yielded by mountains, plains, rocks, and deserts; by the clouds, the rain, the sunshine, the stars, the lightning, or the wind. Almost all the intellectual pleasure derived from these things, may be traced, in some way or other, to their emblematic references, either immediate or collateral, to humanity. The conclusion of Alison, that, unless the imagination be excited, the emotions of beauty and sublimity are unfelt, is, therefore, perfectly just. No landscape, for instance, however admirable in other respects, is complete without *motion*, motion in inanimate nature being correspondent to the manifestations of life in living beings. For this reason the poets never fail to animate their ideal landscapes with some interesting associations that imply motion, such as the waving of woods, the falling of waters, or the gliding of clouds.

55. Beginning with the first-named, what a fine

passage is that in Pope, where he compares the progress of man in the attainment of knowledge, to the enlarged views that are spread before the eye by climbing lofty mountains ! And when we stand at the foot of such mountains, striving in vain to estimate their magnitude and beauty, how powerfully are we reminded of the popular doctrine that to see great *men* likewise to advantage, our acquaintance with them must not be too intimate. No man, it is commonly said, is a hero to his valet. But is this, after all, the true way of putting and interpreting the proposition ? "The fault," says Carlyle, "is at least as likely to be the valet's as the master's, since to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant." The skilful man perceives what the mountain is, even before he begins to climb, for the streams that have descended the flanks bring with them waifs of the delicate little alpine flowers which belong to the heights, and which tell as truly what awaits him above as if he had already scaled the slopes. Nothing is more untrustworthy than this doctrine of a man being no hero to his inferior, except in a very limited and ignoble sense, since each thing can be read only by its own light, and the less cannot illuminate the greater. How common, in reference to philosophy and creeds, to find a weak and inferior soul seeing the *unbelief* of a superior one, without even getting so much as a glimpse of its *belief*. While we journey through

the valley which divides those great mountains,—speaking now of the mountains of nature,—shut in from the sight of everything save the narrow vista in front, and the dimly-seen objects immediately beside our path, how beautifully are we reminded again that we should never attempt to judge of the truth or of the future while oppressed and half-blinded by tears and trouble! For what can we conceive of the fair prospect, while we are deep in the shades of the valley? Rainbows are never beheld during storms, or while destruction is going on. Wait a moment and the tricolour arch will come.

56. Where, again, can we have a finer instance of the adaptedness of the works of nature to illustrate moral reflection than the passage in Milton, in which he likens the progress of crime to the lengthening shadows of the setting sun? Cicero uses the falling of a heavy body, thrown from a precipice, to illustrate the same species of career. How beautiful, too, is that passage in the “*Helena*” of Euripides, where the poet compares the changeableness of Menelaus’ fortunes, during the siege of Troy, to the alternate waning and waxing of the moon! Plutarch uses the same circumstance to illustrate the oscillations of fortune in the chequered life of Demetrius Poliorcetes. Shakspere abounds with such similitudes; and even in the homely Anglo-Saxon verses of old king Alfred they are not rare.

57. What shall we say of the sun and the sunshine, of night, and the stars, and the dawn? The subject may at all events be fittingly commenced with a short quotation from that charming volume, "Thorndale," by Wm. Smith. "What there is," says he, "of brief and fitful enchantment in this life of man, I, too, have partly known. I have heard music, I have seen mountains; I have looked upon the sea, and upon clouds, and flowing rivers, and the beauty of women. I have loved: vainly or foolishly, I still have loved. I have known, too, the other enchantment, second only to it—that early dawn of meditative thought, when the stars of heaven are still seen in the faint fresh light of the morning; afterwards there is more light upon the earth, but there is no star; and we wait till the dark comes down upon us before we see the heavens again!" Reverse the thought, and still what an exquisite image comes to the surface.

"Weep no more, gentle shepherds, weep no more,  
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,  
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.  
So sinks the day-star in his ocean bed,  
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore  
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky."

Light is, of course, the universal and acknowledged emblem of truth. Mark, that like truth, it always proceeds in straight lines. Mark, too, how

beautifully the source of light, or the sun, has its analogue in the soul of man; for of all living things that God has made, that which evolves most light is the human heart when directed towards good. The imagination is the prism which, accurately placed, converts that light into exquisite and imitable hues. Joy and happiness, again, are like the sunbeams, with a special relation to their warmth, as in that most lovely line,

“ ‘Twas whispered balm, ‘twas sunshine spoken !”

Alas, that the rays of happiness should, to the mass of mankind, present no trace of colour until fractured. There is a grand harmony, too, between the solar system and the human race, every man being required to work out his individual moral life, just as every planet revolves in its own orbit, while the total has likewise its sublime progressive movement, whither no astronomer can tell us. Beautiful, too, is the image which the heavens, and their innumerable gems of light, afford of the Christian religion, for in that, as in the firmament, the more diligently we probe and search, the more stars do we discover.

58. Come now to the consideration of the inorganic constituents of the earth, the simple stones and earths and metals, all of which, in turn, supply images, if not veritable emblems. How like, for example, to quicksilver, is that self-same Christian Church we have just spoken of! If a number of

globules of this metal be placed in contact with one another, they instantly unite into one large drop, and so complete is the union that the aggregate mass preserves the very form of each constituent globule. But if there are particles of dust in proximity to the globules, this powerful attraction is obstructed, and the globules remain isolated and distinct. They repel each other rather than combine, for the metal must be cleansed before the globules will unite. So with the various parts of the Church of Christ. All are of the same substance, but the dross of the world causes discord where all would naturally be harmony and union. Thanks be to God, there is One who, it is promised, shall sit over it as "a purifier and refiner."

59. One of the most conclusive proofs that the harmony of creation is not a mere theory, or imaginative device, but a great FACT, cotemporary with all material existence, is that it thus appeals to us from every department of nature. It is not as if moral and spiritual truths were found to be imagined or represented in particular classes of objects. There is not merely a "language of flowers," and a symbolism among animals. It is not only the grander and the living forms of creation which address us as emblems. All things, even to the very humblest shapes of inorganic matter, show themselves to be words of the sublime picture-language in which God has expressed His mind,

and to occupy a place so important in the resplendent poem of the universe, that for a single one of them to be absent would mar its heavenly metre, and cause a gap in the concord of its music ; just as from the Old Testament, not one type of the Messiah could be spared, because each prefigures some distinct features of His unsearchable love and wisdom ; and just as from the sunbeam, which is His emblem, not one constituent colour could be omitted without destroying the perfection of its beauty, and impairing its efficacy as a life-bringer.

60. This fine truth is well illustrated in the emblematic qualities of the *metals*. Though lifeless, motionless, inorganic substances, yet are the properties of metals at once so marked and diverse, that to the observant mind their representative characters appear as plain as those of the most highly organized animal. This is why in common conversation we continually use and hear such phrases as the golden rule, the golden mean, leaden wit, brazen impudence. People utter such expressions from the dictates of their intuition. It is not from imitation or caprice that such metaphors are used, and it is seldom from scientific acquaintance with the metals themselves. The representative characters accord with the *physical* properties of the several metals. The nobler those properties, the higher is the significance ; the humbler they are, the lower is the sym-

bolism. Lead, for example, though it has its uses, like the lower faculties of our nature, is a metal of little value, because of its extreme softness and liability to decay; it is at the same time of such great density as to have become another name for heaviness. Hence it represents what in pretension is proud and arrogant, yet in reality weak and ineffective. Cicero, laughing at a lame and impotent argument, exclaims, *O plumbeum pugionem*, “O leaden dagger!” Terence uses “leaden” for *doltish*. Gold, on the other hand, is conspicuous for properties which place it in the highest rank. Exceeded in weight only by platinum, no metal is of a more beautiful or lustrous colour; no metal is more ductile; nor is there one which so completely withstands exposure to the atmosphere, and the power of such corrosive acids as will dissolve copper in a few moments. When in a state of fusion, gold loses nothing either in bulk or quality: it is equally insusceptible of being oxydized, except by ingenious chemical process. Everything here mentioned presupposes and indicates a noble significance. Men in all ages, accordingly, perceiving the natural conformity of gold with all that is most excellent and precious among the things of intellect and affection, and their respective phases or states,—have used it as their word-picture for such things, speaking of golden hope, golden opinions, golden words, golden expectations. Shakspere advert's to gold in many

a beautiful line. Describing the music of Orpheus, he says that his lute was

“ Strung with poet’s sinews,  
Whose *golden touch* can soften steel and stones ;  
Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans  
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands.”

In another place he speaks of countenances pale with sorrow, yet “ gilded ” by native nobleness that no calamity could overpower; a metaphor at once so just and striking as of itself to show how correct was Aristotle’s conception of the nature of true genius, the surest indication of which he represents to be quickness in discovering those fine relations between the moral and the natural worlds which wholly escape the common eye, and which no education can teach the dull and inapt to discern. That also is a rich passage where he alludes to

“The elegance, facility, and *golden cadence* of Poësy.”

For the office of genuine “ poësy ” is the dealing with the highest truths of nature, and their most lovely and enduring aspects, and it is precisely these things which in gold are emblematically summed up. Physical circumstances of peculiarly pleasing and excellent quality are also described as golden, as when Pindar speaks of “ golden health ; ” and Shakspere of “ golden sleep.” Anacreon has  $\chi\rho\nu\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma\ \mathcal{A}\phi\rho\delta\iota\tau\eta\varsigma$ . Horace calls amiable manners, *aurei mores*.

61. What in the sight of God is most excellent and precious, is purity and goodness of heart, together with the continual and active exercise of the emotions and desires which arise therefrom. Hence, in the Divine word, which is written, just as the world was created, by the law of correspondences between things spiritual and material, such goodness is denoted by gold. Thus, plainly because of its symbolism of living and useful piety, it is said in Isaiah, —in the course of a description of the glory of the Church by the introduction to it of innumerable converts,—“The multitude of camels shall cover thee ; the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah ; all they from Sheba shall come ; *they shall bring gold and incense*, and shall show forth the praises of the Lord.” When, on the other hand, the prophet laments the declension of the Church, he exclaims,—“How is the fine gold become dim !” The “incense” mentioned in the previously cited verse, denotes, as shown by parallel texts, the exercise of a lively and grateful faith, such as always accompanies the practical Christianity implied by the gold. Hence these substances are again mentioned in connection, when it is said that the wise men who came from the East to worship the infant Jesus, “brought gold and frankincense.” For this act of theirs was not simply one of personal homage. Not a single thing mentioned in Scripture has a temporary or local significance. Every deed and every incident is a lesson

in representatives, to all times, of what it behoves mankind to perform, or of what will be the consequence of a given course of conduct.

62. To the man who seeks God with his whole heart, it is promised that gold shall be *given*; “to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba.” Gold of Sheba, however, is not the only kind which Scripture mentions. There is also gold of Ophir, gold of Tarshish, gold of Havilah, gold of Uphaz. Nor are these distinctions arbitrary or meaningless. Goodness, though one in the collective, is nevertheless of varied form and manifestation, according to each man’s perception, temperament, and point in spiritual progression. And the various localities that are named, like all other places mentioned in Scripture, evidently have symbolic meanings in harmony therewith. In Job, for instance, it is said that if we will “return to the Almighty” we shall “lay up gold as dust, and the gold of *Ophir* as the stones of the brooks.” Here some specific state as to affection for goodness is manifestly intended, or it would have been needless to promise a specific reward.

63. The general sense is beautifully and strikingly illustrated again in the history of Abraham, who, it is said, was “very rich, in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” All Christians, in all ages, beginning with St. Paul, have recognised the fine typical character of Abraham. To be consistent with itself, this cha-

racter must of course involve not merely an incident or two in the life of the great patriarch, but every particular that is narrated of him, and therefore the allusions to the silver and gold. These, while they were veritable physical possessions with Abraham as an individual, representatively denote the high and comprehensive principles of goodness and of truth with which, as a typical personage of the first order, it was necessary he should be endowed. "Silver" is mentioned, because throughout the Word this metal is used as symbolic of the clear understanding of God's *truths*, which is quite a different thing from the effort to act upon His principles of *goodness*. Men may revere and externally worship God from their wealth in the silver of knowledge; but it is only when they possess the gold of love to do His will, for its own heavenly sake, that they practise the genuine Christian character. Abraham was in the exercise of both. The former therefore, that is, the *knowledge* of truth, though a splendid and enriching possession, is yet a lower kind of wealth than the love of pure goodness. Hence it is denoted by a metal, excellent in itself, but secondary to incomparable gold.

64. Other fine examples of the general signification of gold, as mentioned in Scripture, are those met with in the Apocalypse: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed."

Here is meant, that only through Divine aid can we procure power to do that which is right and acceptable ; and that our highest wisdom is to seek that aid forthwith. It is the sublimely figurative way, so characteristic of the word of God, of reminding us that the most foolish, absurd, and inconsistent thing in being is the man who has not yet stepped into the path of regeneration. The visions of heaven and its phenomena which St. John beheld, repeatedly included gold as an ingredient. The city of the New Jerusalem, and "the streets thereof," appeared, he relates, like "pure gold," as did also the reed with which the angel measured it. The elders wore "crowns of gold," reminding us of the magnificent portraiture in the Psalms,—"The King shall rejoice in Thy strength, O Lord, and in Thy salvation how greatly shall He rejoice ! For Thou dost anticipate his desires with the blessings of Thy goodness; Thou settest a crown of *pure gold* upon his head." And not only has the "King" a golden crown bestowed on Him, but "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of *wrought gold*." "King" and "daughter," are figures denoting certain noble attitudes of the soul in reference to God; the gold with which they are said to be adorned being the consociated love of goodness, and the shining and beautiful activity with which it is put in practice. The spiritual gold of the "city" has its predictive and representative counterpart in

the gold with which the ark of the tabernacle, the altar, and the mercy-seat were inlaid. Gold was not used in the construction of these simply because of its physical splendour, but because in primeval times all religious observances were framed in express accordance with the correspondence between things natural and divine, with the added reason, in the case of the Jewish ritual, of there being a sublime and heaven-taught prefiguration in every detail. The profuse decoration with gold of Solomon's temple rested on the same circumstances, this famous edifice having been the antetype of the temple "not made with hands." The cherubim, the palm-trees, and the flowers with which the temple was adorned, together with the insignia of the priests, were overlaid with the same metal. It was because of the typical character of Solomon himself, so familiar to the Christian inquirer, that "Year by year brought every man his present to him, vessels of *silver*, and vessels of *gold*, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and camels."

65. Even the making of idols of silver and gold was from perception of the significance of these metals. Idolatry always copies the formularies of truth, differing from the worship which true religion pays, simply in forgetting the thing originally signified, and resting in its material picture, too often led thence, however, into worse observances. When men, in any age or in any country, frame for them-

selves false doctrines and false rules of life, by the perversion of what is right, they spiritually mould silver and golden images and worship them as their gods. It is these errors which are meant when the prophet says, that "in that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." And it is the same which are alluded to by the psalmist (in the spiritual or figurative sense of his words) when he says,—"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands; they have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not," etc., the sense of which description is that all merely human dogmas and principles are utterly destitute of vitality and reasonableness, because only that which comes from God is truly living and profitable. In *appearance* they are virtuous and intellectual, but in actuality they are blind, deaf, and senseless. It is these perversions of God's truths, and the hypocritical assumption of a virtuous exterior for worldly and selfish ends, which are referred to, likewise, when curses are pronounced upon those who *steal* the Lord's silver and gold. So in the Apocalypse, the woman arrayed in scarlet and purple is described as "decked with gold," and as having "a golden cup in her hand" which yet was "full of abominations." Here is plainly intended the infamous and diabolical deceit which is veiled

under a show of high and lovely excellence by the characters representatively denoted.

66. Nothing could more strikingly commemorate the recognition by the ancients in general of the symbolic character of these and other metals, than the traditions they have bequeathed us of the Golden and Silver Ages, with the succeeding ones of Brass and Iron. That there were such ages is no dreamer's fancy. Nor are the names mere pagan metaphors—Scripture uses the very same phraseology. “For brass I will bring *gold*, and for iron I will bring *silver*.” Similar mention of the four metals is made in other places, the brass and iron denoting inferior forms of truth and goodness, such as are possessed and practised by men who act only from external motives. Spiritually, and in fact, the Golden Age was that when every one did what was good from the pure love of goodness. Mythologically it was the time when, as Ovid tells, fear and punishment were unknown, when mutual justice and confidence prevailed, when the soldier was unborn, and the earth yielded plentifully of all that was needful to man's happiness and welfare.

Ver erat aeternum, placidique tepentibus auris  
Mulcabant zephyri natos sine semine flores :  
Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris ibant.

“Then reigned eternal spring; gentle zephyrs cherished with kindly breath flowers that grew unsown; and rivers of milk and honey flowed lavish across the plains.”—Met. i. 106.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE SEASONS, ETC.

67. EVERY phenomenon witnessed in nature, and every aspect which it presents, like the forms and the ingredients, speaks to the mind of something human. How beautiful and exact, the resemblance to human life in the progress of the seasons ! Hence they are used perpetually by the poets to illustrate man's progress from infancy to old age, as in the well-known and eloquent passage in the fifteenth book of Ovid's Metamorphoses. Hence, too, the Egyptians, in their hieroglyphics, drew the sun at the winter solstice as an infant ; at the vernal equinox as a youth ; at the summer solstice as a man in the highest state of vigour ; and at the autumnal equinox as an old man. Thomson introduces it at the conclusion of his " Winter :"

"Behold, fond man !

See here thy pictured life ! Pass some few years,  
Thy flowering Spring, thy Summer's ardent strength,  
Thy sober Autumn, fading into age,  
And pale concluding Winter comes at last,  
And shuts the scene."

So in "Cymbeline"—

"What should we speak of  
When we are old as you ? When we shall hear  
The rain and wind beat dark December?"

Cicero gives expression to the same beautiful similitude in his "Essay on Old Age;" while Dante uses the progress of the *day* as an emblem of human life. It is from the same general analogy that we constantly associate good fortune with a fine morning, and the reverse with clouds and ungenial weather.

68. But the finest analogy yielded by the seasons is that of the development of man's higher nature, whether we take the history of progress in natural, in intellectual, or in spiritual knowledge. It is in connection with this, moreover, that we best see what is the true order of the seasons, which is not spring, summer, autumn, winter; but winter, spring, summer, autumn. It is an error to begin the reckoning of time with spring and daybreak, since the earliest state is always one of cold and darkness. After *this* comes sunrise, then in successive advent, morning and high noon, or as in the plant-world, buds, leaves, flowers, fruits. "Let there be light" receives its sublimity from the idea of preceding darkness: "Pray that your flight be not *in the winter*," means, pray that you depart not this life while your souls are yet in spiritual cold and darkness.

69. Thus to find emblems of human nature even in times and seasons, is alike interesting and consolatory. Their continual recurrence results from the simple fact that *change* is the only feature necessary

to constitute resemblance to our mortal history; change from an embryo state to maturity, from maturity to decrepitude, from decrepitude to conclusion and decay. The ancients were particularly fond of seeking out these likenesses of themselves, and not only as presented by external nature, but as yielded in the abstractions of the mind. One of their authors tells us that Minerva having desired the Sciences to give a definition of man, Astronomy called him a *planet*, because he is always moving; Logic described him as an *enthymeme*, or an argument drawn from contraries; Geometry pointed to a *circle*, which ends where it began; while Rhetoric compared him to an *oration*, his birth being the exordium, his events of life the narration, his sighs and joys the tropes and figures, and his death the peroration. We can never think too deeply or too much on the philosophy of *change*,—**CHANGE**, “the great lord of the universe,” one of the most mournful yet most animating themes the mind can dwell upon. For there is no truth more cheerful than that decay, death, and disappearance, are *not* annihilation, but simply the circumstances attendant on change of form. Annihilation is both a moral and a physical impossibility. Nor is there any employment more salutary than the contemplation of this grand truth in its thousand shapes and phases, and the eliciting from it the still nobler truth, that as the chrysalis is the cradle of the

butterfly, at the same moment that it is the tomb of the caterpillar, so will the grave be to our own existence. If the Pythagoreans derived so much consolation from the ever-changing aspect of material objects, what comfort may not we extract from the self-same sources, when we have science for our torch, and revelation to ratify and confirm the strongest argument we could desire that mutation should afford ! All satisfaction in life is based upon the regular recurrence of the events which sustain and refresh it. Changes are, in reality, the impelling powers which at once rule and gratify us ; and from the dependence we are enabled by a munificent Providence to place upon this regular recurrence (on the daily rising of the sun, for instance), we get an idea of what faith is in regard to spiritual things ; namely, a profound and incomparable sense of security in regard alike to the present and to the future.

70. The changes of the seasons quicken our minds to the recognition of another important truth; namely, that in contrasts lie the springs of all our enjoyments, whether purely emotional, or derived from the objects and qualities of physical nature. For without a knowledge of the acid we should be ignorant of the sweet, and without the sweet we should know nothing of the agreeableness of slight pungency. The hot noon creates the pleasures of the cool of evening, and were there no darkness

82 THE INFINITE LITTLE AND THE INFINITE VAST.

we should be apt to forget what a luxury it is to be in the light. Hence the beautiful line in "Paradise Lost"—

"Grateful vicissitude, like day and night."

Just so are the feelings, the passions, the sympathies of men. As the several and individual elements of our inner being, these, if we would learn the source of the enjoyments which place us above the brutes, must all be employed in proper turn and to appropriate degree; and then, to be properly appreciated in the collective character, must be so alternated with physical exercises as to make the deeds of the body and the occupations of the mind recreation to one another. Herein assuredly consists one of the profoundest secrets of human happiness.

71. Alternations, in truth, create not only the delights which spring from contrast, but often yield a secondary harvest. Did the sun shine perpetually, not only should we be ignorant of the charm produced by the alternations of light and darkness, but a far deeper enjoyment,—one of the grandest of all human pleasures,—would be lost to us; for though, under such circumstances, a practical knowledge might sooner be gained of "the infinite little," we should possess none whatever of "the infinite vast." Our upward view would be confined to the atmosphere which envelops us, instead of reaching

into the amplitudes of space ; and, instead of feeling that our world is probably but one of innumerable spheres, all populous with animated intelligence, we should never rise above the pride of arrogant sectarians ; for it is night alone that makes us "universalists." In a word, *we should never see the stars.* Gazing on them, as they nightly reappear, how beautiful a correspondence do we perceive between their departure and resuscitation, and the death and renewal of plants already spoken of, and consequently how beautiful a companion emblem of our own great change !

72. Contemplate, again, the various *colours* which embellish nature, and what agreeable harmonies do we find them holding with our ideas and feelings. They may be classified in many different ways. The most philosophical arrangement, or at all events the most elegant, is that which places them in the order of the succession of the human qualities and states which they respectively symbolise ;—infancy, that is to say, followed successively by childhood, youth, adolescence, manhood, maturity, and reverend age. For, beginning with purity, which is the argent or silver of life, does not the succession run through confidence (becoming constancy and faith) represented in blue : then hope, represented by green, when youth looks forward to the royalty of life, and is incapable of seeing an end : then comes love, represented in red or rose-colour : then

dignity and nobleness of heart, expressed in gold or burnished yellow: then sanctity, represented in the intensely rich colour which we behold upon the wings of ravens and similar birds when the sunlight falls upon them, and which gives the true idea of black or sable. The connection of whiteness with purity and innocence needs no illustration; think of the white robes of the ancient priesthoods, and of the “white stone” which is promised to him that overcometh, and it is enough. Blue is the acknowledged emblem of constancy. It is by no accident of mere rhyme that the expression “true blue” exists. The idea would naturally be suggested by the colour of the sky, which is the colour of the atmosphere when saturated with sunshine: and these two things,—the material representative of heaven upon the one hand, and of the all-pervading, all-sustaining “breath of life,” the omnipresent Spirit of God, upon the other,—are exactly what the thought of constancy or perfect faith alike suggests and finds its reflection in. Sapphire-coloured stones have from time immemorial been the representatives of fidelity and well-kept promises; it cannot be from mere caprice that legend, and poetry, and popular usage have selected a blue flower to convey the sentiment of “forget-me-not.” Green, which symbolizes hope,—the beautiful tone which forms the bass to every vibration of nature, and is heard in every song of the

genuine poet,—becomes thus emblematical, because the colour of the spring. In the symbolism of Christian art green represents regeneration, and hence is found to be employed in the symbolic paintings upon the windows of the cathedral at Chartres, as the fitting colour for the cross. St. John moreover is represented there, nearly always, as wearing a green robe. Think again of the green rainbow in the Apocalypse: “He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald” (iv. 3). In ancient times the emerald signified love, and its expression in the conjugal union; thus quite consistently, since love implies the idea of beauty in the mind of the lover, and beauty is the promise of the future. For the same reason, to the present day an emerald ring is considered the most appropriate gift to the betrothed. From the same general idea,—namely, that of hope, restoration, rejuvenescence, regeneration,—the emerald was anciently reputed as a specific against the bites of venomous snakes. Regeneration being curative to the soul, its symbol among the jewels was esteemed curative to the body.

73. Red, the colour of the blood, speaks for itself as the emblem of dignity and nobleness. Combine it with blue, that is to say, associate true nobleness with perfect faith and constancy, and we have purple,—the colour consecrated in all ages to what is

superlatively excellent, so that it has become the synonym in language for imperial power. Whatever is unspeakably grand, beautiful, and kingly, purple denotes to the mind : filled with the enthusiasm of the analogy, the poets constantly use the word purple as an epithet for such objects, Virgil giving it to the sea, Horace to the swan, Ovid to the most attractive of the feminine graces ; while Milton, descanting on conjugal affection, says in his own inimitable language—

“There Love his golden shaft employs ; there lights  
His constant lamp, *and waves his purple wings.*”

74. Black or sable, as already hinted, is not to be thought of always, and necessarily, as an emblem of sadness, mourning, and ignorance. Think of it rather as the colour of darkness, the sublime and ancient condition of things, from which issue both life and light. All things commence in darkness ; this at least is the surrounding of every germ and embryo, of every incipient form and object known to nature. Everywhere in creation the dim and shapeless is prior in point of time. The universal law is that the passive shall precede the active ; that ignorance shall go before knowledge ; that indifference shall be the antecedent of love. This is why the narrative of the creation opens with saying that the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep ; and why

among the ancients night was finely styled  
“Mother of all things.”

“With him enthroned,  
Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things.”

The cosmogony of the Greeks, as given by Hesiod, and of every ancient nation of which any records survive, opens with darkness. Such too is the order acknowledged by all the greatest poets who have ornamented and enriched the world. What a grand line is that in Mephistopheles' address to Faust, when he first shows himself!—

“Ein Theil der Finsterniss die sich das Licht gebar.”  
(Part of the darkness which brought forth light!)

Put these various things together, and it will be seen that sable carries with it the idea essentially of supreme dignity and grandeur. It is in those glorious nights when the skies are unclouded, and the innumerable stars are shining,—*αστροισι μαρμαρούσαν*, as old Æschylus sang of them three-and-twenty centuries ago,—that even in this present life we see most of God:—from these it is that light, deep and clear as children's eyes, enters our souls, exalting them and humbling them. Sable accordingly becomes the symbol of what is admirable from its antiquity and exaltation, and it is wise in man to connect it with the highest offices of the Christian priest.

75. Art is engaging and successful precisely in the degree that it recognises such truths as these. In proof, it is unnecessary to do more than refer to the

elegant appreciation of such harmonies as have been described, in the works of the sculptors of the two greatest nations of antiquity.

The Egyptians, in their hieroglyphics, used abundance of the most beautiful emblems; but for obvious reasons the sculpture of Greece and Rome had a much better field for their display. We are apt to look upon these statues merely as examples of exquisite skill; but their *poetry* is no less admirable than their workmanship. Take, for instance, the lovely group representing the three Graces. These were the beings who, in the romantic pantheism which sprang to life on the shores of the blue *Ægean*, were regarded as presiding over kindness and all good offices. In conformity with this, they are represented as three young, beautiful, and modest virgins, holding one another by the hand, and with no drapery but their own innocence. They are represented naked, to show that kindnesses ought to be done with sincerity and candour; their youth denotes the constant remembrance we ought to retain of kindnesses received; and their holding the hands joined is emblematic of the perpetual intercourse of kindness which ought to be practised among friends.

76. The statue of Cybele, the goddess who represented the earth, was equally full of meaning. She was represented as a robust woman, in the highest glow of health, by which the fecundity of the earth

was signified : she had many breasts, to show that the earth gives aliment to all living creatures ; and on her head was a coronet of leaves, expressing the beauty and luxuriance of the vegetation which clothes the surface.

77. So too with the poets' descriptions of beings not represented in marble. 'The Furies, it was taught by Cicero, were only to be understood as *personified remorse*. Such, in a word, is the universal character of the impersonations of the Greek mythology, and of all religious imagery, barbarous as well as civilized.

" What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield,  
That wise Minerva bore, unconquered virgin,  
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,  
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,  
And noble grace, that dashed brute violence  
With sudden adoration and blank awe ? "

78. Emblematic meanings were not confined to their sculpture by the ancients, but were introduced into every production of the kindred arts. The Temple of Honor, for instance, was built in such a way that there was no entering it without passing through the Temple of Virtue. This was to show that, as honour should be the reward exclusively of virtue, he that aspires after the former should seek it by adopting the principles and practice of the latter, and that true honour is inaccessible by any other avenue.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE OMNIPRESENT GOD.

79. IN conclusion, let a few words now be said upon a subject which, next to the practice of Christian duties, is the noblest upon which the time and thoughts and energies of man can be bestowed.

This is the finding out of God in the multitudinous emblems of Himself with which He has surrounded us. It is not only an animating belief, but Foster asserts that “it is an evident and remarkable *fact*, that there is a certain principle of correspondence to religion throughout the economy of the world.” St. Paul speaks precisely to the same effect in his Epistle to the Romans, when he says, “The invisible things of God are clearly seen by the things that are made.” That is to say, the visible things are emblems of the invisible ones. “An emblem,” says Quarles, “is a silent parable: let not the tender eye check to see our blessed Saviour figured in these types. In Holy Scripture He is sometimes called a fisher, sometimes a sower, sometimes a physician; and why not presented so as well to the eye as to the ear? Before the knowledge of letters, God was known by hieroglyphics. And, indeed,

what are the heavens, the earth, nay every creature, but hieroglyphics and emblems of His glory?"

80. Whether we look at nature in its entirety or in its details, the harmony of the word of God with the works of God is ever manifest; and,—as shown in the Bishop of Oxford's admirable sermon preached before the British Association, at Oxford, in June, 1847, on "Pride, the hindrance to true knowledge,"—becomes the most fascinating, the most cheering, and the most unfading of all objects of meditation. The heart which seeks to interpret these things conjointly soon realizes both the deep beauty and the close reference to every individual of all time, of the Divine words, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" and verifies the truth and sanctity of the ancient promise to the pure in heart, that "they shall see God."

81. If we take simply the correspondence between the happiness and consolation which are yielded by virtue and religion, and the integrity and unceasingness of the enjoyment derived from the contemplation of external nature, how much truth and beauty of analogy are unfolded to us! Men who love nature always find her a sweet comforter and solace when weary of their work or harassed by their cares; therefore do they seek "the green fields, the quiet lanes, and the peaceful mountain-sides. However listless the limbs may have been

in sustaining the weary body, there they are braced, and the lagging gait becomes buoyant again. However perverse the memory may have been in presenting all that was mournful, and insisting only on what cannot be retrieved,—there it is at first disregarded, and then it sleeps; and the sleep of the memory is a day in Paradise to the unhappy. The mere breathing of the cold wind on the commonest highway is oftentimes sweet rest and comfort.” So with the spirit when oppressed by trouble. By seeking consolation in the promises of religion, as David beautifully expresses it, we are fed “in green pastures, and led forth beside the waters of comfort.” And as the consolations of religion are given to us “without money and without price,” and are free to all for ever, so while the charms of nature appeal to our hearts do we love and relish them the more, because they are our own, and no man can take them from us. It was never intended that happiness should be dependent on riches or greatness, for that would be an oligarchy of enjoyment, from which all but some few would be excluded: sought for in nature, it is procurable by every seeker, untaxed and without limit.

82. Nature is especially emblematic of the Creator in its unsearchable order, harmonies, and regularity,—in its indestructibleness as to essence, and in the immortality of its principles and laws. For there is nothing which the mind can conceive in

these attributes that the eye does not behold in the material world. It is perhaps more sublimely emblematic still as a portraiture of the profuse imagination, the exquisite taste, and the consummate skill of the Divine mind ; and, if possible, still more again so in regard to the qualities of forethought, benignity, and benevolent munificence with which the former attributes are associated, and in the provision for all wants before they shall be felt. This is especially the case if we contemplate the *vegetable kingdom*. There the flowers and fruits of each succeeding year remind and re-assure us of the unforgetting care of God, and of His spiritual provision for the meanest and lowliest of our fellow-creatures. There every structural arrangement, every vital phenomenon, and every circumstance connected with the adaptation of means to ends suggests some beautiful and impressive analogy. What can more beautifully illustrate the way in which everything connected with our mortal race is pre-arranged, than a flower as it lies folded in the bud ? Every leaf is laid in its place, and a time appointed for it to expand ; the unrolling of one petal makes room for the next inside, and everything proceeds with the precision and harmony which are best calculated to secure ultimate beauty and well-being. Take the smallest moss, and the same truth is there ; and written, not in the imperfect manner we might expect, but in characters

distinguished for the marvellous completeness of their form. "Nature," says Pliny, "is a mirror, in which the Creator allows Himself to be seen greatest in His smallest works."

83. The expanding flower symbolises another beautiful truth; namely, that the Deity *works gradually* in the development of His intentions. A far sublimer illustration of this grand and immeasurable truth is given us, however, in the structure of the great globe itself. We know that by one simple, instantaneous fiat, God can accomplish even greater wills than that which uttered "Let there be light;" but geology gives a noble illustration that, instead of this, He makes use of time the duration of which is profound. The same gradual development that we witness in the flower is shown in the adaptation of the crust of the globe for the benefit of man; the same successive development of creative plan belongs to the daisy and to the strata of the earth. The structure of the earth stands not alone in this: everything without exception in the works of God partakes of a character that seems to bespeak majesty,—the majesty of progressiveness and of *slowness*,—the absence of haste and hurry. Of His nature it has been said truly, and therefore without irreverence, that being the nature that has eternity at its disposal, it *can afford to be slow*. It is for mortals to hurry,—for the creatures of a day to be in haste; but it is for the Eternal to move on

with the measured slowness which we see connected with every law and phenomenon of the globe on which we tread. How soft and imperceptible is the breaking of the day! How gentle the fall of twilight! How beautifully do the spring and autumn, the winter and the summer, come and go! They are never stationary, and yet they never seem to be in movement. They blend together slowly, beautifully, majestically. And what a majestic ease about it also! It is an ease which elevates a ridge of hills, or floats a bubble on the water, with equally little effort. When we contemplate these things as they deserve, what may we not hope for *our own* being! Though much is told us, more is hidden. The entire truth would be too stupendous, and is therefore wrapped up in the prophetic nature of emblems such as these. In this as well as in all other matters where, as the old tragedian finely observes, "darkness shrouds what the soul vainly aspires to know," or where the kindly providence of God seems suspended for a while, let us console ourselves by looking on those mysterious rivers which, like the Guadalquivir, after flowing for some distance in majesty and beauty, suddenly lose themselves in the ground, and are wholly untraceable by human view, yet eventually burst out again, as pure, and bright, and grand as ever. Thus too let us always strive to unite moral with natural philosophy, accomplishing thereby the most

useful, and therefore the most essentially delightful union that the mind of man can possibly effect,—recognising in fact that ancient marriage of Religion with Poetry instituted at the foundation of the world. For by effecting such union the mind flows in a mighty stream of cause and effect, fertilizing the society around it, embellishing its own aspect, and ennobling its aspirations. Every object then has its beauty, and every beauty adorns itself with the colouring of moral eloquence. Moral science, social science, and natural science, like the Graces, should always go hand in hand, and ever recognise the poetic faculty as belonging to their sisterhood. All should be simultaneously enlisted in our pursuit of truth, so that at the same time the heart may be affected and the mind be purified. Nature is not to be regarded as a vast theatre, and its objects as provided simply to gratify our senses for a passing hour, but as a museum of emblems and symbols the most eloquent and recondite, and to be read by

“The interlinear version of the light  
Which is the spirit's, and given within ourselves.”

## INDEX.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Abraham, History of, 48, 72<br/>Acacia, 36<br/>Alison quoted, 62<br/><i>Allium sativum</i>, 30<br/>Alms, meaning of the word, 42<br/>Anacharsis, Travels of, 55<br/>Anacreon cited, 8<br/>Ants, 10<br/>Apocalypse, the, quoted, 73, 76, 85<br/>Apple-tree, old, 29<br/>Appulus, Fable of, 47<br/>Arion, Fable of, 15<br/>Ariosto cited, 47<br/>Aristotle quoted, 70<br/>Ash-tree, 36, 48<br/>Ass, the, 18<br/>Astarte, 49<br/>Ashtoreth, 49<br/>"Attala" quoted, 19<br/>Baal, Worship of, 49<br/>Badger, the, 18<br/>Balsam-trees, 43<br/>Barthelemy, Abbé, cited, 55<br/>Beaver, the, 13<br/>Bees, 9<br/>Birch-tree, 36<br/>Birds, 14<br/>— Songs of, 8<br/>Black, Signification of, 86<br/>Blue, Signification of, 84<br/>Bluebottles among corn, 29<br/>Blumenbach cited, 8<br/>Boar's head, 18<br/>Brock, 13</p> | <p>Brooke, the surname, 13<br/>Bull, the, 18<br/>Camel, the, 18<br/>Carlyle quoted, 63<br/>Cathedral Scenery, 50<br/>Chamomile plant, the, 28<br/>Change, Philosophy of, 79<br/>Chartres, Cathedral of, 85<br/>Chase, Emblems of the, 11<br/>Chateaubriand quoted, 19<br/>Chaucer cited, 1, 8<br/>Cheerfulness, Emblem of, 8<br/>Christian Church, Emblem of the, 67<br/>— Religion, Emblem of the, 66<br/>— Virtues, Emblems of, 42<br/>— 71<br/>Cicero cited, 69<br/>Cock, the, 14<br/>Colours, Signification of, 83<br/>Comparison, Use of, 4<br/>"Comus" quoted, 58<br/>Conjugal love, 8<br/>Contrasts, 81<br/>Cornfield flowers, 29<br/>Corn-marigolds, 29<br/>Cornucopia, 18<br/>Cowper cited, 8<br/>Cowslip, the, 29<br/>Cricket, the, 8<br/>Crime, Emblem of progression in, 64<br/>Cybele, 48, 88<br/>Cypress-tree, the, 30</p> |
|---|--|

## INDEX.

- Dante cited, 79  
 Darkness, 65, 86  
 Dog, the, 12  
 Dolphin, the, 15  
 Doves, 8  
 Drought, 59  
 Dryads, the, 47  
 Eagle, the, 7, 14  
 Elephant, the, 18  
 Elm-tree, the, 36  
 Emerald, the, 85  
 Emerson quoted, 1, 60  
 Epithets, Emblem of useless, 29  
 Faith, 81  
 Fig-tree, the, 40  
 Figurative language, 2  
 Fishes, 15  
 Floralia, 58  
 Flowers, Emblems in, 17  
 Flower-buds, Emblems, 19  
 Flowers and rivers, 58  
 Forests in Scripture, 38  
 —— Beauty of, 45  
 Fox, the, 12  
 Friendship, Emblems of, 22  
 Fruit-trees, 40  
 Furies, the, 89  
 Gold, Signification of, 69  
 Golden Age, the, 77  
 Graces, the, 88  
 Green, 84  
 Groves (idols), 49  
 —— Worship in, 48  
 Guadalquivir, the, 95  
 Hawk, the, 14  
 Hedgehog, the, 18  
 Heraldry, 11  
 Hernandia, 30  
 Hillia parasitica, 30  
 Hope, 33, 84  
 Horse, the, 11  
 Horse-chestnut, 36  
 Idolatry, 75  
 Idols, 75  
 Incense, 71  
 Ivy, 22
- Jay, the, 7  
 Language of flowers, the, 28  
 Lead, Signification of, 69  
 Light, Signification of, 65  
 Lion, the, 11  
 Magpie, the, 17  
 Metals, Representative characters of the, 68  
 Milton quoted, 58, 65, 89  
 Mountains, 63  
 Mulberry-tree, the, 43  
 Nature, Consolations to be found in, 91  
 Nettle, the, 28  
 Nightingale, the, 8  
 Oak, the, 26, 36, 47  
 Ocean, the, 59  
 Olive, the, 39  
 —— Wild, 47  
 Orange-tree, the, 43  
 Order in Nature, 92  
 Ossian quoted, 58  
 Ovid quoted, 13, 77  
 Owl, the, 7  
 Parnell quoted, 55  
 Patience, 59  
 Petiveria alliacea, 30  
 Pigeons, 8  
 Pine-trees, 29  
 Plants, Emblems in, 17  
 Poesy, 70  
 Poetry, Character of true, 5, 32  
 Purple, Signification of, 85  
 Quarles quoted, 90  
 Quicksilver, Emblem in, 66  
 Rainbows, 64  
 Red, Signification of, 85  
 Rest-harrow, the, 29  
 Resurrection, the, 21  
 Rivers, 52  
 Rousseau, J. J., quoted, 58  
 Sable, Signification of, 84, 86  
 Sabrina, 58  
 Sculpture, Ancient, 86  
 Sea-gulls, 7  
 Seasons, the, 79

- |                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Seeds, Emblems in, 26, 27     | Trees, 21, 35                   |
| Sentimentalism, 32            | Truth, 57                       |
| Severn, River, 58             | Valleys, 64                     |
| Shakspere, 61                 | Vine, the, 40, 42               |
| — quoted, 9, 43, 70, 78       | Violet, the, 28                 |
| Shallow streams, 56           | Walnut-tree, the, 43            |
| Simile, Example of, 1         | Water, Signification of, 56     |
| Springs, 56                   | Whiteness, Signification of, 84 |
| Stag, the, 12                 | Willow, the, 43                 |
| Stars, the, 66, 83            | Winter, 79                      |
| " Thorndale " quoted, 65      | Woodbine, 29                    |
| Thorns and Thistles, 22       | Yew-tree, 30                    |
| Time, Emblems of lapse of, 52 |                                 |

